314 / JULY 1999

THE NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Mind games

◆ Cowboy capitalism in Alberta

◆ Junking science

◆ Hoop dreams in the Philippines

◆ Smoke and mirrors in the Balkans

The rise of corporate propaganda

PRICE: UK £2.50 AUS. $5.60 AOTEAROA/NZ $5.50 CANADA/US $4.50 ◆ THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR WORLD DEVELOPMENT

COMING NEXT MONTH

The **Great Education Scandal**

– who's selling the world's children down the river?

JORGEN SCHYTTE / STILL PICTURES

'Education, education, education' – while Northern politicians' jabbering reaches fever pitch, the UN has made education in the South a priority at every conference it has held in the 1990s. Yet what is the net result of this concern? All over the world schools remain underfunded and teachers overburdened and dispirited; 'education reform' has become a euphemism for cost-cutting, privatization and back-to-basics conservatism; and as the millennium ends 120 million children still receive no schooling at all.

The next issue of the **NI** argues that the time has come to say 'Enough!'

◆ **Paradise postponed:** why the UN's 'Education for All' goalposts were moved back to the year 2015 – and how to make sure they're not moved again.

◆ **Gender canyon:** girls frozen out in the South, boys failing in the North.

◆ **The Coca-Cola classroom:** the creeping cancer of school privatization.

◆ **Testing, testing:** exam league tables, 3 Rs mania – but whatever happened to the education of the whole child?

◆ ALSO CONTAINING A SPECIAL 4-PAGE PULL-OUT:
HOW THE MILLENNIUM COMPUTER BUG COULD TRIGGER NUCLEAR WAR

COMING SOON: ◆ IRAQ ◆ BANANAS ◆ INDONESIA ◆

Bound Insert Card. Side 1. Front. Subscription form for new UK readers. **Side 2**. Front. Subscription form for new Overseas readers and Gift Subscriptions. **Sides 3 and 4**. Back. Order Form for NI Publications and other products.

New Internationalist

The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

The **New Internationalist (NI)** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively managed:
Accounts: Peter Brown.
Administration: Véronique Szerauc.
Design: Alan Hughes, Andrew Kokotka, Ian Nixon.
Editorial: Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Nikki van der Gaag, David Ransom, Anouk Ride.
Editorial (North America): Wayne Ellwood, Richard Swift.
Magazine marketing: Michael York.
Marketing (North America): Ian McKelvie.
Production: Fran Harvey.
Publications editor: Troth Wells.
Publications marketing: Lucy Kilpatrick, Dexter Tiranti.
Sales and circulation: Jo Lateu, James Rowland.

The **NI** Website:

http://www.newint.org/

The **NI** is published monthly except that the January and February issues are combined into one bumper issue.

The Independent News Collective is an association of radical and alternative publishers. INK publications cover issues of social, political and personal change, issues which are often neglected by the mainstream media. INK enables its members to cooperate on distribution, marketing and publicity. New Internationalist Magazine is an INK member.

It helps us occasionally to allow carefully screened organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

Subscription enquiries

Please write to your subscription office with full details including (if possible) your subscription number shown on the magazine address label. Please inform us of any change of address.

SUBSCRIPTION OFFICES AND ANNUAL PRICES

UK: Tower House, Lathkill St, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF. Tel: 01858 439616. Fax: 01858 434958
Individuals £24.85 p.a.; £6.85 qtly. Institutions £50. Student/Unwaged £14.70 (please telephone for further information).
Republic of Ireland: Tower House, Lathkill St, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1858 439616. Fax: (0044) or (0) 1858 434958. *Individuals IR £29.85 p.a.; Institutions IR £55 p.a.*
Canada: PO Box 706, Markham, Ontario L6B 1A7. Tel: (905) 946-0407 Fax: (905) 946-0410
Individuals 1 yr – $38.50 (includes GST), in NF, NS, NB $41.38 (includes HST); Institutions 1 yr – $64.20 (includes GST) in NF, NS, NB $69.00 (includes HST); Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60; GST Reg No R121784854.
United States: PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. Tel: (800) 661 8700. Fax: (905) 946 0410.
Individuals 1 yr – $35.98 Overseas (by air) 1 yr – $60; Institutions 1 yr – $60.
Australia and PNG: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A., 5000. Tel: (08) 8232 1563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887. *Individuals A$56.40.*
Aotearoa/New Zealand: PO Box 4499, Christchurch. Tel: +64 33 656 153 E-mail: newint@chch.planet.org.nz
Individuals $55; Institutions $65 (includes GST).
Rest of the World: Tower House, Lathkill St, Market Harborough, LE16 9EF, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1858 439616. Fax: (0044) or (0) 1858 434958.
Individuals £29.85 p.a.; £8.50 qtly. Institutions £55 p.a. Please pay in sterling by UK Cheque, Eurocheque, Visa, Mastercard or UK Banker's Draft. Despatch by air only.
E-mail: UK/Rest of world: newint@subscription.co.uk North America: magazines@indas.on.ca

Editorial and Advertising Offices

Editorial: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1865 728181. Fax: (0044) or (0)1865 793152.
E-mail: ni@newint.org **Advertising:** Tel/Fax: (0044) or (0) 1372 276233.

Canada/US Editorial: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel: (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.
E-mail: nican@web.net **Advertising:** Tel: (902) 421 7022 Fax: (902) 425 0166.

Australia: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel: (08) 8232 1563 Fax: (08) 8232 1887. E-mail: sandyl@newint.com.au

Print and Distribution

Origination: Graphic Facilities, London UK.

Printed on recycled paper by Warners Midlands plc, UK.

News trade distributor: COMAG Specialist Division, Tavistock Works, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QX, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 1895 433800. Fax: (0044) or (0) 1895 433801.

North America. Publications Contract 101400. Postage Paid at Toronto. Periodicals postage paid at Lewiston, NY. (USPS 329-770) US Post-master: send address changes to: New Internationalist, PO Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092.

Permissions and Indexing

Permissions: UK/Rest of the World: Sonja Singleton, Cover Stories, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1, UK. Tel: (0044) or (0) 171 278 2332. Fax: (0044) or (0) 171 837 1192. Canada/US permissions: Toronto Editorial Office. Member of Cancopy. Reproduction of all material in **NI**, excluding photographs, is free to primary and secondary schools.

Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index, CPI CD-ROM, CPI Online, the Canadian Index, Canadian Business and Current Affairs, and the Alternative Press Index. Available in full-text electronic format from EBSCO Publishing and Micromedia.

© New Internationalist Publications Ltd. 1999.

ISSN 0305-9529

Magazine printed on recycled paper

SOUTH BANK
UNIVERSITY
·LONDON·

MSc Development Studies

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Taught by staff with a wide range of practical and research experience of development in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the MSc offers the following units, each of which can be taken as a short course:

- Images of Development
- Developing Countries in the World Economy
- International Trade
- Health and Gender Issues
- Agrarian Policies
- Strategies for Industrialisation
- Finance and Development Management
- Human Rights
- Forced Migration and Resettlement
- The State, Civil Society and Development
- Research Methods for Development Studies

A Research Project forms a central part of the course, with staff offering detailed supervision of programmes directed to students' research interests. Students have access to a computerised data bank on the internet, designed specifically for research into development issues. The MSc has ESRC specialist subject recognition.

The development programme also offers a distance learning MSc in Environmental and Development Education.

To discuss the course in more detail, contact Professor John Taylor, Course Director on 0171 815 5769. For a prospectus and application form, please contact the Postgraduate Admissions Office. Telephone: 0171 815 8158. Fax: 0171 815 8273. Email: registry@sbu.ac.uk

The Faculty also offers Masters courses in Critical Media & Cultural Analysis, Education, Critical Social Policy, European Politics, European Public Policy, Race & Ethnicity, Social Research Methods and Social Identities.

South Bank University offers flexible, relevant courses at the heart of London, only minutes away from the professional, social and cultural facilities of the capital.

A charity serving the community through excellence in teaching and research

CENTRAL TO YOUR SUCCESS

IF YOU ARE
THINKING OF INVESTING
ETHICALLY

Contact
The Ethical Specialists

For further information please contact
Ethical Investors Group, Greenfield House, Guiting Power,
Cheltenham GL54 5TZ
Tel: 01451 850777

ETHICAL
INVESTORS GROUP
Ethical Financial Management

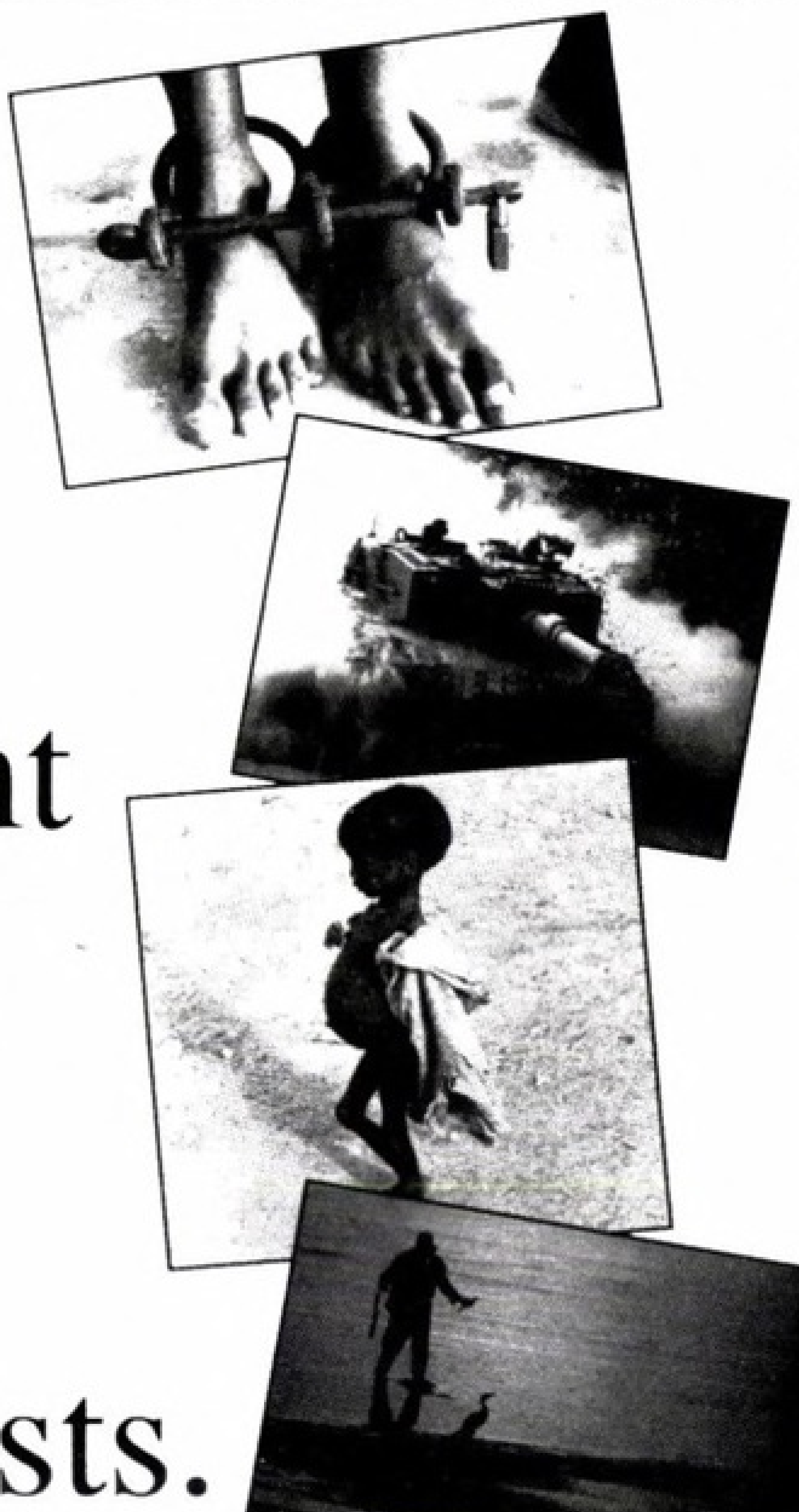
Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority
*The PIA does not regulate all of the products within this category.
Statutory Warning: The value of an investment can fall as well as rise.

Please Tick where appropriate

☐ Retirement Planning ☐ Lump Sum Investments*
☐ Regular Savings* ☐ Life Assurance and Protection*

Ms/Mr/Mrs ....
Address ....
Tel: Work .... Home ....

Ethical Investors Group is the trading name of Ethical Investors (UK) Limited.
Registered in England. Registered number 2857294. NI



With
our help
your
investment
can avoid
these
hidden costs.

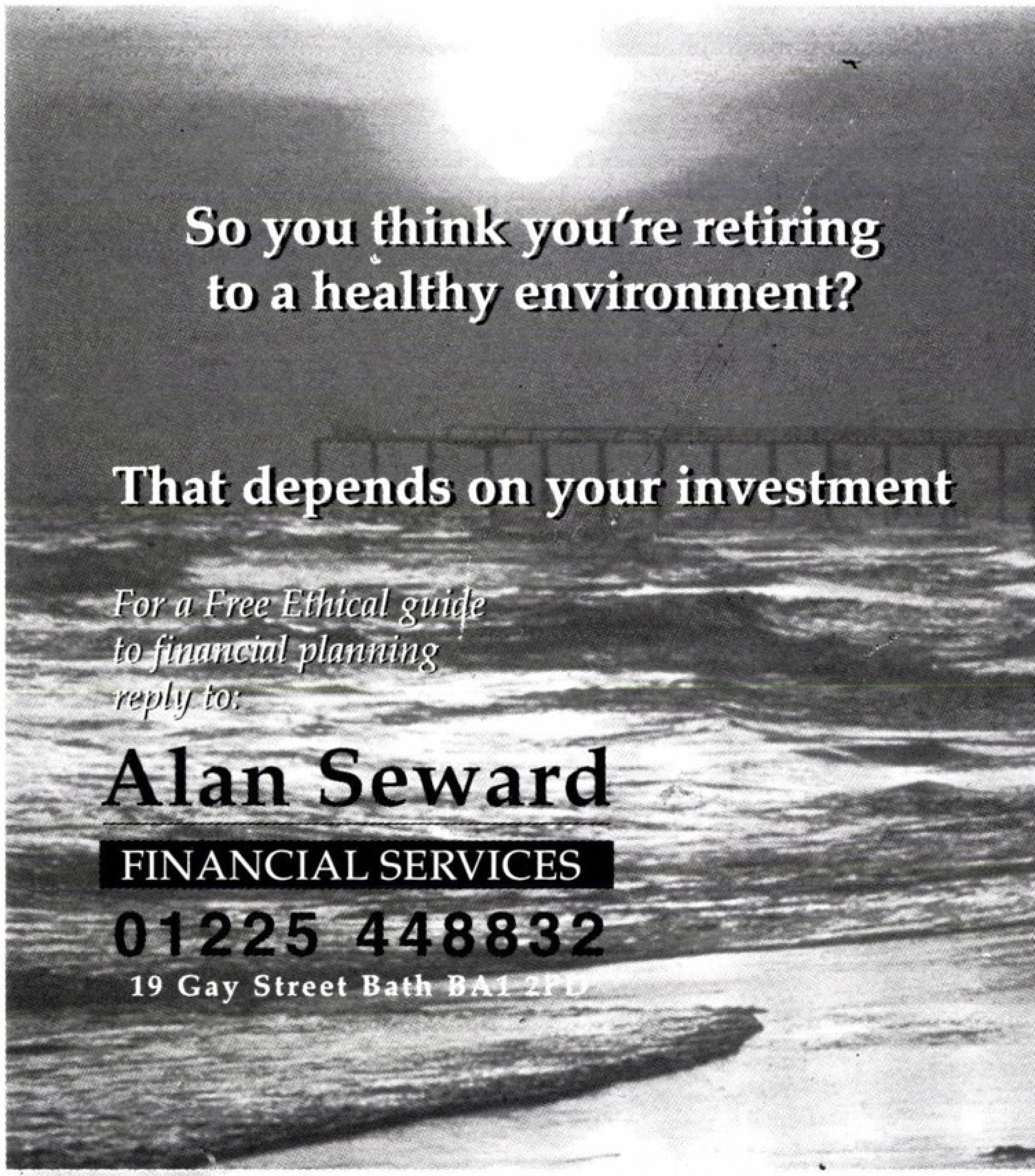
www.barchestergreen.co.uk/ethical

Not everyone believes in profit at any cost.
Barchester Green Investment are independent financial advisers who specialise in ethical investment, a profitable way of investing your money without compromising your values. To find out more about profit with principle call: 01722 331241 (24 hrs) or fill in the coupon.

BARCHESTER GREEN INVESTMENT
Established 1985

Mr/Mrs/Ms ______________________
Address ______________________
____
Postcode ____________ Tel. ________________

Return to: Barchester Green Investment Freepost Salisbury Wilts SP1 2UR
Remember, the price of units can fall as well as rise and past performance is not a guarantee to the future.
Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority. NI



So you think you're retiring to a healthy environment?

That depends on your investment

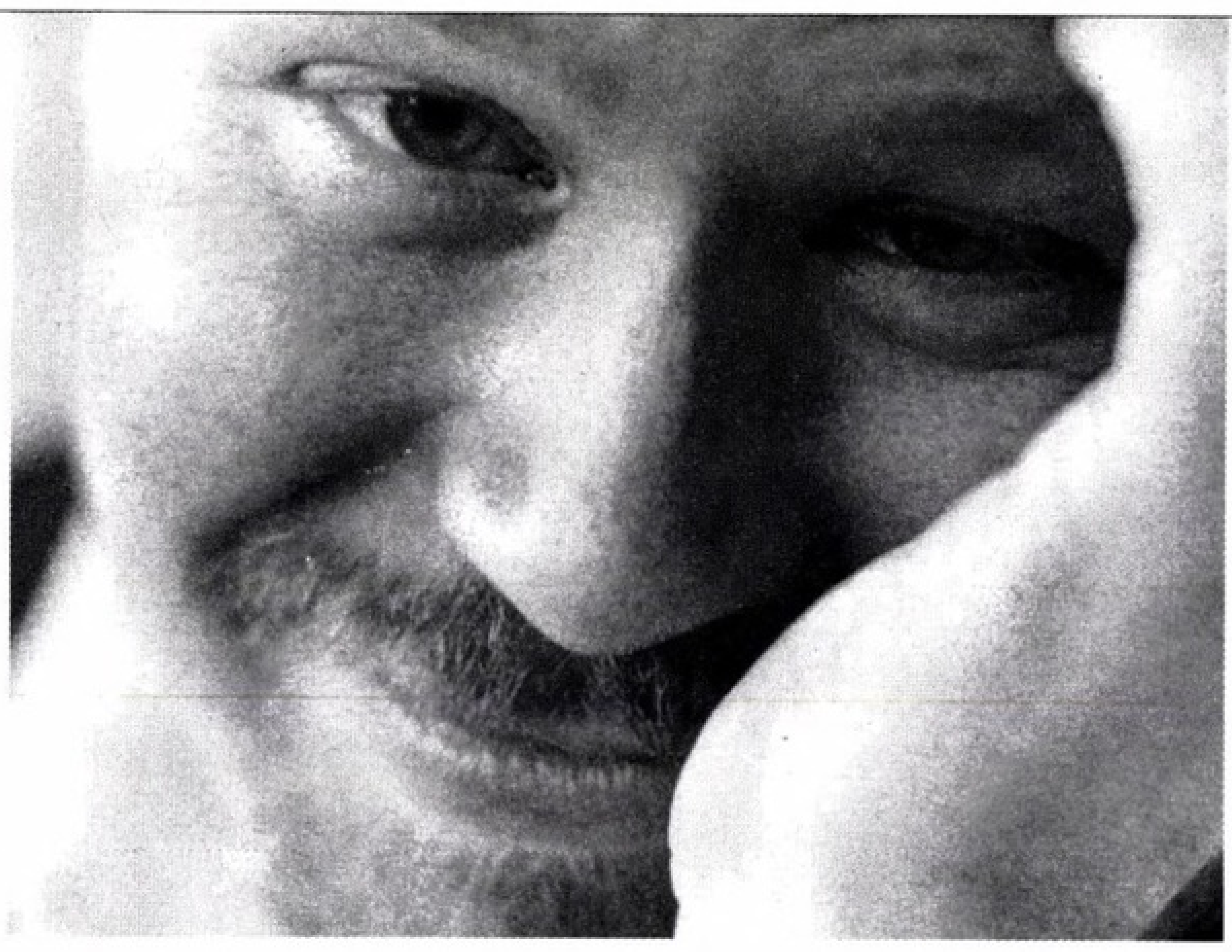
*For a Free Ethical guide
to financial planning
reply to:*

Alan Seward
FINANCIAL SERVICES
01225 448832
19 Gay Street Bath BA1 2PD

Cut along dotted line fill in and return to Alan Seward Financial Services 19 Gay Street Bath BA1 2PD

PIA
A Member of
Countrywide
Independent Advisers Ltd
which is regulated
by the Personal
Investment Authority
for life assurance,
pensions & investment
business only

Please send me more information on Ethical investments
Name: ______________________
Address: ______________________
____
____
Postcode: ______________________
Telephone number: __________ Work: __________



Put your money where your heart is.

The Ethical Property Company buys buildings and rents them on reasonable terms to organisations working for social change.

We aim for returns that match your savings* and results that match your values.

Call 0117 980 9747
for a share prospectus

www.centres.demon.co.uk

THE
ethical
PROPERTY
COMPANY PLC
Investing in social change

Invest as little as £300

** Based on the company's projected net dividends which are equivalent to the return which would be achieved by a tax-payer from an interest-bearing savings account paying a gross rate of 3.75% in 1999-00 rising to 6.75% in 2005-06.*

This is an investment advertisement issued by The Ethical Property PLC and approved by Triodos Bank NV, a firm regulated by the SFA for the conduct of investment business in the UK.

This does not constitute an offer or invitation to subscribe for shares. Applications can only be made on the application form that will be contained in the prospectus and on the basis of, the information that will be contained in it.

You should not subscribe for shares in The Ethical Property Company until you have read and understood the terms and conditions of that prospectus.

If you are in doubt as to whether investment in The Ethical Property Company is suitable for you, you should consult a person authorised under the Financial Services Act 1986 who specialises in advising on the acquisition of shares and other securities.

Investment in The Ethical Property Company is intended to be a long-term investment and income from the investment may fluctuate. Because an investment in the Company may go down as well as up, you may not get back the full amount invested. In addition, it maybe difficult to sell or realise your investment, or to obtain reliable information about its value or other risks to which it is exposed.

The Ethical Property Company is the trading name of The Ethical Property Company PLC, a company incorporated in England and Wales (registered no. 2961327).

Triodos Bank

Global Futures Degree

BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE

A modular programme taken either as a Single Honours degree or as part of a Combined Studies degree, Global Futures is for students who:

- are concerned about the environment and the nature of development
- want a multidisciplinary degree linking subjects as diverse as technology, politics, economics, industrial development and current affairs
- want to examine the probable and preferable futures we are creating for ourselves and future generations
- are looking for laboratory and fieldwork experiences which are set in a practical context.

Please contact Dr Brenda Pratt on 01225 875643
email b.pratt@bathspa.ac.uk

Were you ever involved in Third World First?

THIRD WORLD FIRST

Thirty years on, Third World First is still characterised by the determination and passion of its members and is still the only national student organisation campaigning on world poverty, human rights and the environment.

To celebrate our Thirtieth Anniversary we are producing a history of Third World First (now called People & Planet), and we need to know what *you* remember of your involvement. We also want to reunite old friends to celebrate our achievements.

Please contact: Sasha Blackmore, Third World First/
People & Planet, 4A East Avenue, Oxford OX4 1XW
E-mail: twf@gn.apc.org

people & planet
previously third world first
action on world poverty, human rights & the environment

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATION: STEPHANE DENIS

Mindgames 7
Richard Swift explores the Jekyll and Hyde world of corporate PR and measures the costs of the spin shenanigans to our democratic rights.

The propaganda industry 11

Peddling miracles and amnesia 12
*A look at the elaborate campaign to wipe the dirt off the face of Chile's military dictatorship by **Alejandro Reuss**.*

Celebrity spin 14
*Adidas sends a basketball superstar to sell shoes and dreams in Manila. **Adam Porter** is along for the ride.*

One-trick pony 16
*An interview with **Stuart Ewen** on the murky history of professional propaganda.*

PROPAGANDA – THE FACTS 18

The junkyard dogs of science 20
*From global warming to chemical poisoning the corporate mongrels leap to attack. An investigative probe by **Sheldon Rampton** and **John Stauber**.*

Bandaid bandwagon 23
***Sarah Blackstock** argues that the micro-credit love-in is just a way to duck corporate responsibility for world poverty.*

Lies and the laptop bombardiers 24
***Richard Swift** on NATO evasions and media management in the war with Serbia.*

PR World – What they really think 26

Happy-face politics 28
*Perception management is the name of the game. **Joel Bleifuss** on the crafted candidate and the triumph of the bland Third Way.*

Best coverage money can buy 30
***Sharon Beder** sorts through the PR tool kit and finds ample instruments for maintaining a corporate-friendly and docile press.*

Letters 2
Letter from Mongolia 3
Update 4
The NI Interview with **Daniel Ortega** 31
Reviews: plus **Kraftwerk** classic 32
NI Crossword 34
Endpiece: by **Chris Curnow** 35
Country profile: Ghana 36

FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION BY **TIM BOWER/STOCK ILLUSTRATION**.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ANDREW KOKOTKA**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Propaganda

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

WE got a letter from a Russian subscriber now resident in Britain the other day cancelling his sub and claiming that **New Internationalist** was 'the worst propaganda he had ever seen'. Even excusing emphasis for dramatic effect, this is going far for somebody who grew up with the wooden words of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. While I demurred from his judgement – at **NI** editorial meetings we rarely agree enough to be consistent propagandists – it did raise for me the interesting question of what is and what isn't propaganda. Is it just something that is partisan? **NI** is certainly guilty there. Or is it something that isn't true? Or simply something in the eye of the beholder? Or does it imply a manipulation of us suckers?

All the dictionary definitions of propaganda contain the keyword 'systemic'. I think this is crucial because it implies a certain power and reach. The Marxist-Leninist League for True Communism Now or the Church of a Hundred Celestial Awakenings may be consistently telling manipulative lies but their memberships are simply too small and poor for this to amount to effective 'propaganda'. If we accept 'systemic' only certain groups are really capable of propaganda – major political parties, agglomerations of economic power, large churches and of course the State. It may just be possible for certain mass movements to engage in a systemic propagation of their ideas but only with the important caveat that they have enough agreement to be able to do this. For the notoriously divided Left and environmental movements this is always a problem. For a mass movement to achieve a consistent message it is best that they agree a central authority or doctrine. Thus it is easier for authoritarian movements like fascism to engage in propaganda than it is for diverse and democratic ones.

I've never been given so many ideas for potential subjects I 'had to' cover if I were going to uncover successfully the true nature of propaganda. Everyone seems to have a propagandistic hobbyhorse to ride. But the definition of propaganda, like any definition, blurs at the edges. The new development this century is that propaganda has become a profession. It is now called public relations. This fits in with the 'systemic' part as only those with clout and resources can afford to pay the bills for an expensive PR campaign. So maybe it's best to look at power and goals as I have tried to do in this issue. Who has the power to create large-scale PR campaigns? What are they trying to achieve with them? Through this lens it may just be possible to see through some of the mindgames being played with us – and to cry, laugh or get pissed off depending on your disposition.

Richard Swift

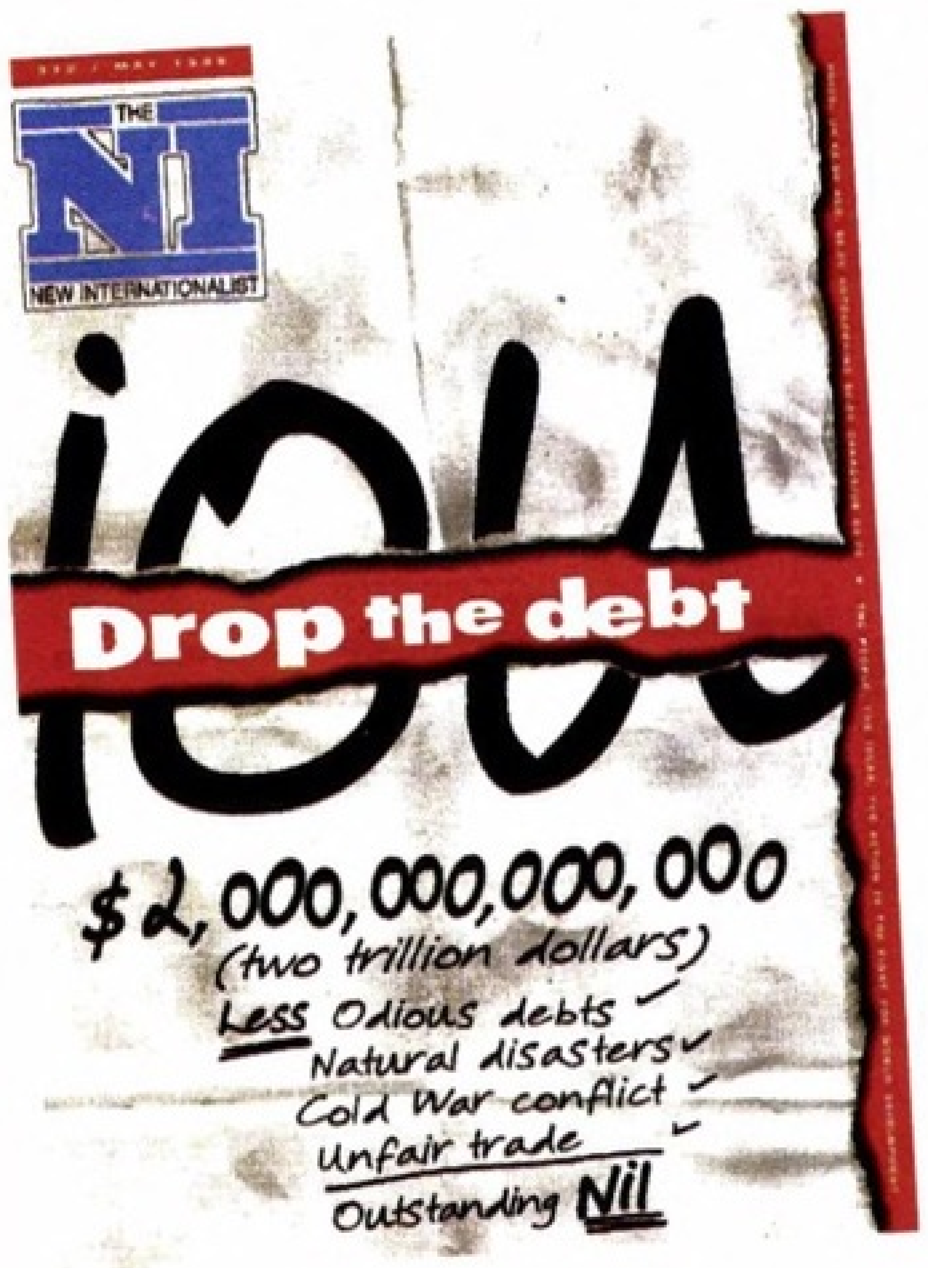
Richard Swift
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Peanuts and compassion

I do not believe that Third World debt can be written off as purely a financial transaction as the **NI** construes in issue **312**. It may seem cynical to suggest that debt is a deliberate instrument of repression, but evidence would appear otherwise. The 'bondage of debt' that David Ransom speaks of is precisely that.



It must be made clear that banks offer high-risk loans to incredibly poor nations because they know that the IMF and national governments will bail them out. Whilst it is true that this is partially to safeguard their own economies, the richer nations are also able to dictate precisely the economic growth (or lack of it) of the debtor nation. Thus we have an interesting and foolproof way of safeguarding the position of one state at the expense of another.

Money is not the issue; it could easily be found. The debts of Third World countries are, to the West, peanuts. Rather than asking how our governments can refuse our demands, we should be asking how they have escaped decency and compassion for so long.

Kerry Wall
St Neots, England

Unclear leaflet

I was rather sorry to get the 'stop the bombing' pamphlet with issue **312**. To me the magazine should give a broad background coverage. The pamphlet makes some fair points, and some highly contestable ones. The comment that Serbian forces have displaced and murdered people 'unchecked by international negotiations and observers' (over 18 months/ 2 years) is an odd comment on the known horrors preceding the action. To say 'it is clear that bombing does not work' seems less clear to others. The 'destruction of democratic opposition' was already near-total. UN action would have been vetoed by both Russia and China, as both repeatedly said.

Anyway the point is not who's right and wrong here (nobody is right probably) but the dangers of a quickly decisive tone on complex issues where a lot of people in good faith who are not militarists strongly disagree with you. By the same token I would never vote Conservative but it would be disappointing in a sense if some of your readers didn't.

Michael Green
Birmingham, England

Doubtful sincerity

The proposed 'Blair doctrine' would allow a humanitarian right of interventions that the UN Charter presently forbids. The Prime Minister is of course entitled to propose changing the Charter, but what entitles him to act as if this change has already been made?

Governments that claim to be intervening on humanitarian grounds in one country should prove their sincerity by avoiding complicity in state repression in others. Yet the US and British Governments armed and backed the Croatian Government, which in 1995 expelled at least 250,000 Serbians. They are arming and backing Turkey's Government, which is now conducting a campaign of repression on a similar scale to the Serbian, that has killed about 2,000-3,000 people. They are also arming and backing the Government of Indonesia, which is guilty of terrorism in East Timor on a far greater scale.

Worst of all the US and British Governments are the key supporters of the murderous sanctions against Iraq, which have killed more than a million people in ten years: this is the nearest present-day example of genocide. These acts of complicity throw some doubt on the sincerity of their commitment to opposing state repression.

Will Podmore
London, England

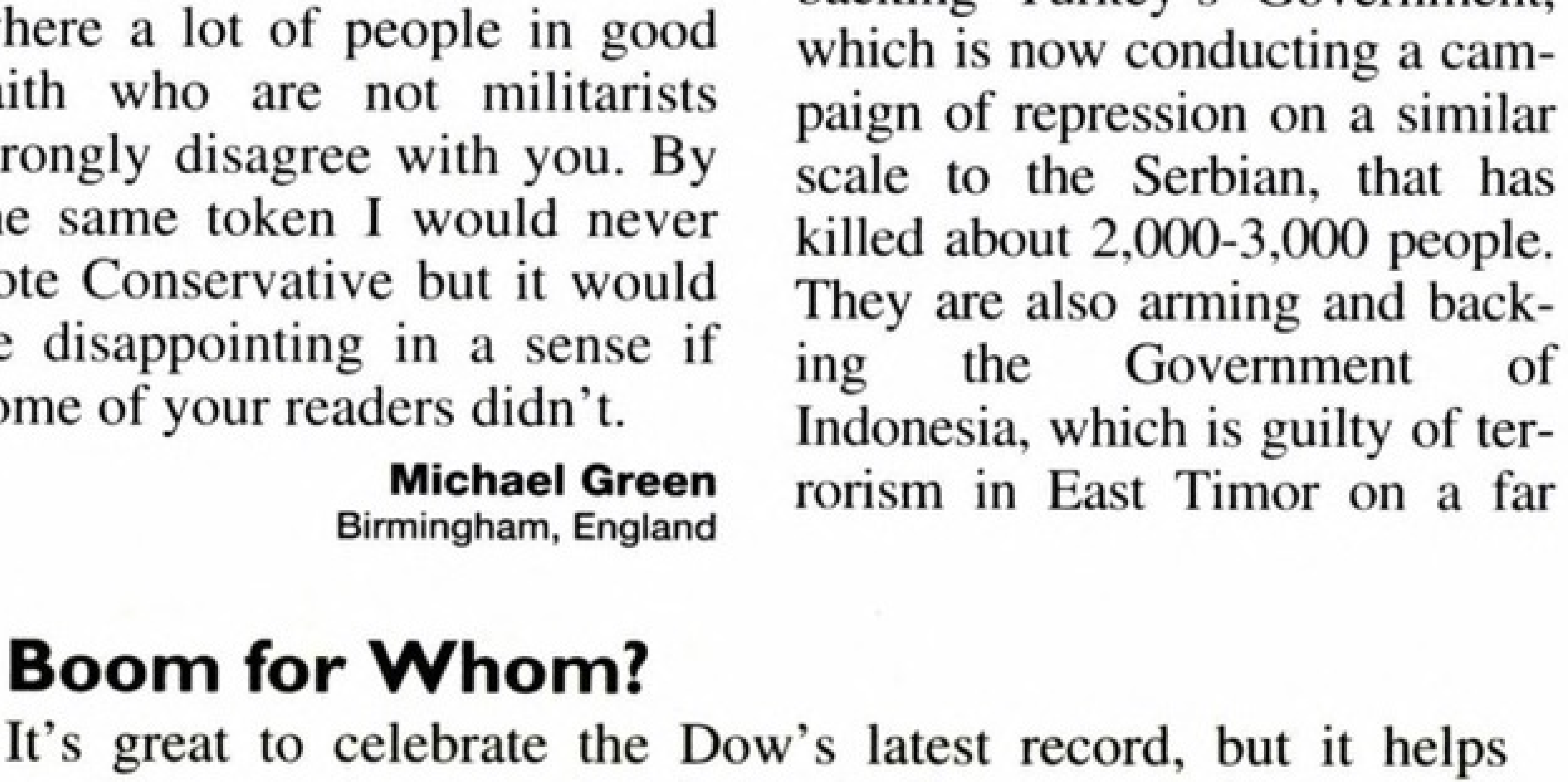
Editor's note: The NI will be publishing issues on both Indonesia and Iraq in the next few months.

Boom for Whom?

It's great to celebrate the Dow's latest record, but it helps one's perspective to notice that only 40 per cent of Americans own any stocks, either directly or through mutual funds, pension funds, or trusts. The richest ten per cent hold 82 per cent of stock-market wealth. Most striking, over half of stock market wealth is held by the wealthiest one per cent of the population. At the very top, the wealth of Bill Gates has now surpassed $100 billion, or more than the combined net worth of the poorest 140 million Americans.

Leaving aside the disturbing implications for democracy and social stability of the increasing concentration of wealth, we can at least note the new market dictum: 'A rising tide lifts all yachts'.

Blaise Salmon
Victoria, BC, Canada



VIV QUILLIN

Old wounds

Thank you for the well-documented article 'Clipping the Condor's Claws' (**NI 311**). Not only has the arrest of General Augusto Pinochet relieved Chilean friends here in Australia who were imprisoned and tortured under the military dictatorship, but these recent developments have opened old wounds and brought back horrific memories for those who have suffered. In Australia, activists are celebrating 20 years of solidarity and aid with Latin America and the Caribbean. We know only too well that the Australian government has been complicit and at times openly supportive of the US administration's brutal treatment of the Latin American people who continue to struggle for liberation and justice in the region. International solidarity is one of the many ways that we can all struggle to achieve a more just and peaceful society. *Hasta La Victoria Siempre!*

Lynda Hansen,
Queensland, Australia.

Scottish centre

Thank you for your issue on Peace and Reconciliation (**NI 311**). Readers may be interested to learn that there is a Scottish Centre for Nonviolence currently being set up. Its address is Scottish Centre for Nonviolence, The Annexe, Scottish Churches House, Kirk St, Dunblane, FK15 OAJ.

Alina Armstrong
Edinburgh, Scotland

Atrocious fate

I was mortified to read the disturbing story ('Update' **NI 309**) about atrocities suffered by Native Canadians at the hands of religious organizations as recently as the 1980s. It is probably no consolation to them to know that Indigenous Australians suffered exactly the same fate until the 1960s. The absolute tragedy is that the Tibetan people are suffering the exact same fate right now at the hands of the Chinese and the United Nations chooses to ignore it, as does the world at large. The Declaration of Human Rights is a farce. How many more generations of the world's Indigenous people must suffer this fate, I wonder?

S M Hawk
New South Wales, Australia

Ridiculous wars

The 'Century in 5s' article in your January issue needs to be updated in the light of current events – is there any war more ridiculous that the Nato aggression against Yugoslavia?

A war that is being fought only for the 'pride' of the aggressors (has anyone noticed that there's no mention of the bullshit of 'the international community' any more?), a war that is actually the cause of the problems that would be solved, which is coupled with a hastened decline of any peace proposal, what can be more ridiculous than that?

Going to the '5 big ideas' this war indeed proves that a UN independent of the US is a prerequisite for the existence of 'United Nations'.

Nikos Missoulis
Southampton, England

CD-Rom price

Thank you for reviewing our CD-Rom program 'Pillaged Lives: Third World Debt and Global Institutions' ('Reviews' **NI 309**). We have had a number of queries about the price, which is $25. People can e-mail us at sjc@web.net or write to 1857 de Maisonneuve west, Montreal QC, H3H 1J9, Canada.

Derek MacCuish
Montreal, Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

Letter from Mongolia

Going home

In her last letter, **Louisa Waugh** ponders on what she will miss on leaving Mongolia.

I knew I was leaving Tsengel village when the weekly mail arrived. Wedged in the bundle of letters handed over to Nina in the post office were three airmail envelopes addressed to me. They were all letters from my family and all said the same thing: 'When are you coming home, Louisa?'

I re-read the thin sheets of paper sitting in my yard with a cup of coffee. Afterwards I looked around me and pursed my dry lips. This small herding community had been my life for the last year. I knew all the local gossip, the simmering feuds and illicit affairs: the celebrations, traditions and drudgery that made up this secluded mountain village. But, after almost three years away from my own country, I suddenly reeled with homesickness, and knew with a sombre certainty my days in Tsengel were numbered.

I thought I was ready to leave. I couldn't face another raw, freezing winter in the mountains. I was sick of fetching slopping buckets of water from the river and washing myself in a tin bath. My skin was dry and my feet were cracked. I told myself there was a lot I wouldn't miss about the countryside.

Over the weeks before I left Tsengel, friends and neighbours crowded into my wooden cabin and constantly invited me for dinner. My stomach bulged after numerous mounds of horse meat and mutton noodles. Mongolians lavish food on guests who are embarking on a long journey – I ate and drank my way around the village, took endless photos and promised to return. In between the feeding frenzy and the farewell disco, I wandered along the river bank alone, absorbing every detail of the wild, silent landscape around me.

Landing in the capital Ulaanbaatar at dusk two weeks later was a revelation.

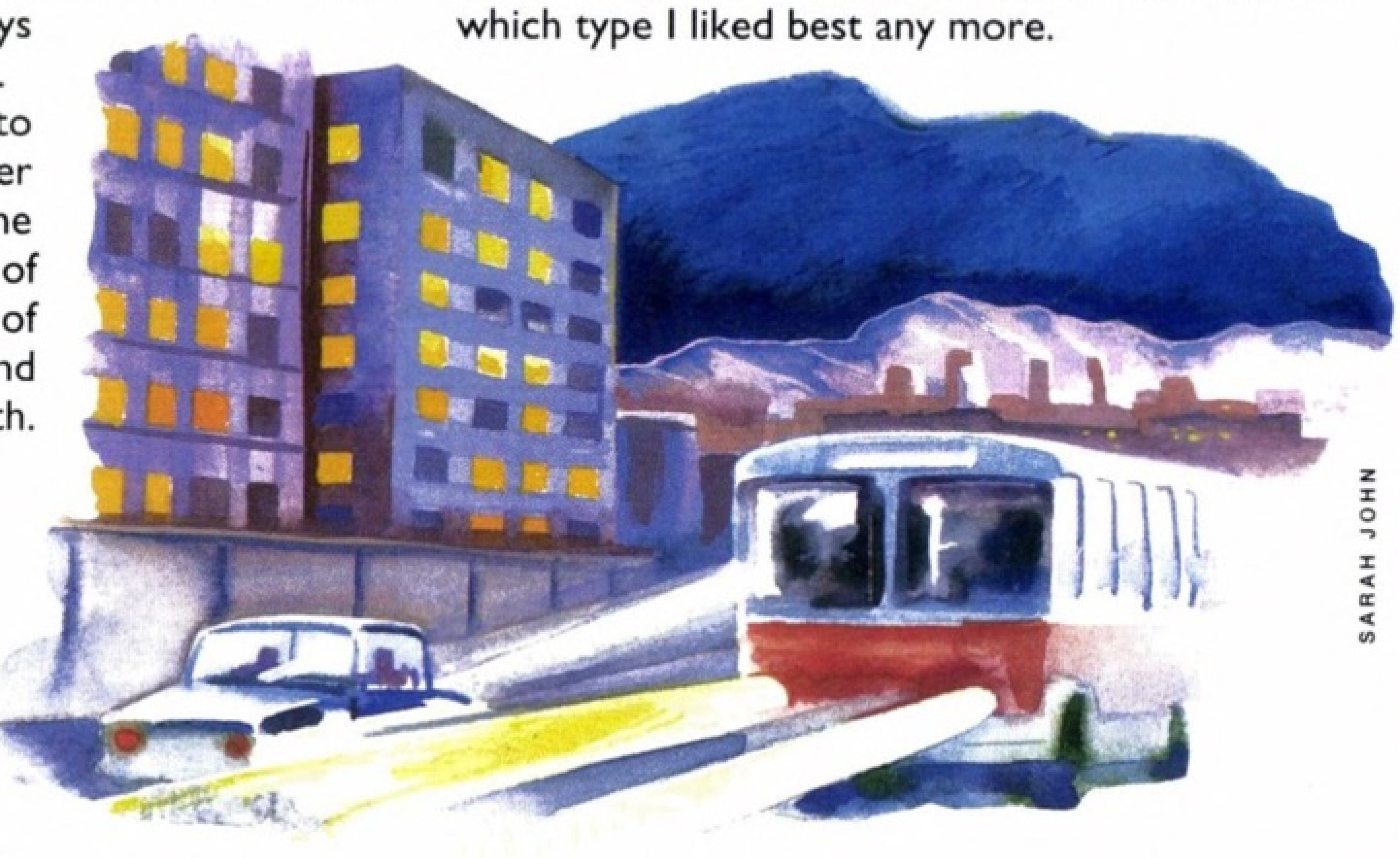
The taxi driver, who looked as though he was about 15, accelerated through the streets as high-pitched pop music screamed out of the tinted car windows. I laughed out loud as the illuminated city centre zoomed past. In the year I'd spent in Tsengel, there'd been electricity for exactly three weeks – and that was for four hours a day. Most people in Tsengel have never been to Ulaanbaatar and I suddenly felt like a flustered tourist, although I'd lived in the capital for two years prior to moving to the mountains.

I stayed with my friend Javhlan, who was amused by my waiting for the kettle to boil for ten minutes, before realizing I hadn't flicked the 'on' switch.

'You spent too long in the countryside,' she commented wryly, as I eventually poured the coffee. 'Just wait till you get back to England!'

But I knew it wasn't returning to London that would floor me – the contrast between life in Tsengel and Ulaanbaatar was far sharper than the differences between two capital cities.

I stood in front of a department store counter for 15 minutes one morning, trying to decide which brand of shampoo to buy. I'd ended up washing my hair with laundry soap in Tsengel (and it didn't look any the worse). Now labels dazzled me. Javhlan howled with laughter when I came home one evening with three different kinds of beer, because I couldn't remember which type I liked best any more.



SARAH JOHN

All these choices were making my life difficult.

The day I'd booked my ticket to London, I sat in Javhlan's centrally heated lounge and mentally rewound the previous year. I had a host of memories from Tsengel impressed on my mind: my decadent birthday party, the chaotic school classes, seeing wolves for the first time, meeting the formidable Shaman.

Now I was heading back to constant hot water, book shops, English cinema and good pizza: all the things I thought I'd longed for. But what, I pondered, would I miss from Tsengel most of all?

It was the people, the immense, indigo sky – and the post office. I'd always raced to the tiny, cold post office at 11 am on Wednesday morning. Every week I'd felt nervous and excited when the decrepit delivery van rolled up. If I had mail, it made my whole day: I'd read and re-read letters, friends would visit my home to see photos or magazines I'd received – a parcel would send me into raptures. Getting a letter would never be quite so precious again. ■

Louisa Waugh lived and worked in Mongolia and is now writing a book about life in Tsengel. Next month there will be a new letter from Lebanon.

Update

AUSTRALIA

Water fight

Aboriginal law and agricultural development plans clash

The future of the Kimberley? Cotton vs indigenous culture.

WYMAN MEINZER / STILL PICTURES

In the Kimberley region of Western Australia, the Karajarri people's culture and country are being balanced against the desires of a Government-backed industry proposal for irrigated and genetically modified cotton.

Karajarri are the Aboriginal owners of country stretching across the Great Sandy Desert and along the Indian Ocean coastline for more than 200 kilometres. They are also custodians of the western part of the Canning Basin, the largest undeveloped sedimentary groundwater basin in Western Australia. To Karajarri, water is living water, *kurnangkul*. Living water is said to be inhabited by various 'snakes' who are powerful beings that need to be respected. 'Water is the life for us all,' says spokesperson John Dudu, born in 1910. 'It's the main part. If we are gonna lose that I don't know where we gonna stand. If that water go away, everything will die. That's the power of water.'

As traditional owners, Karajarri people inherit and bequeath customary responsibilities for 'bottom water', 'on-top water' and various dependent ecosystems. Under their law, Karajarri are responsible for looking after these water places, ensuring that people follow the correct protocols when visiting and maintaining knowledge through stories and song.

To geological surveyors, those *kurnangkul* are simply 'surface expressions of the water table in unconfined sandstone and limestone aquifers'. Western Agricultural Industries propose to pump living water to grow genetically engineered cotton, on pastoral leases over Karajarri country. They will need broad-scale clearing and monoculturing. Chemicals are likely to pollute aquifers. Huge amounts of water will be drawn, dropping regional aquifers rapidly by around 70 metres. Waterholes and wetlands may dry up or become salty.

Karajarri people feel that plans to develop cotton farms on their country, irrigated by groundwater, amount to a direct threat to their cultural traditions and to their capacity to practise their law. In particular, people fear drawdown of the water table and chemical pollution of the groundwater.

John Dudu believes this is an issue that strikes at the integrity of not only Karajarri culture and country, but of all Kimberley peoples: 'We feel that a big wind is gonna come, soon as the underneath go wrong. This is the place here that belongs to Aboriginal people. We are not only talking about Karajarri country, but this is one law, from the *Pukarrikarra* that goes right through. One law for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley.' ■

Peter Yu, Executive Director of the Kimberley Land Council.

To offer scientific or financial assistance to the Karajarri contact: landsea@comswest.net.au

Finnish landmines in Europe

Finland is now the only country in the European Union that has not signed the international landmine ban. The Government argues that it requires the capacity to use landmines along its long border with Russia, if an attack occurs from that direction. But the Finnish refusal to support the landmine ban sits uneasily with its status as a large aid donor, donor of mine action resources and its role in international peacekeeping. In addition, Finland is about to take over the presidency of the European Union whose members are all landmine ban supporters. Write, urging Finland to adopt the Ottowa Convention, to:

Ms Tarja Halonen,
Minister of
Foreign Affairs,
Ulkoministerio,
PL 176, FIN 00161
Helsinki,
FINLAND.

Finland hands out aid but not action on landmines.

N DUNLOP-CHRISTIAN AID / STILL PICTURES

Eels on estrogen

In Shanghai, China, Professor Wu from the Aquatic Products University reports that eel farmers have been using human birth-control drugs to increase the size of their eels. Eels have nearly doubled in size over the past year, reaching more than half a metre in length. But this rapid development scares local scientists who suspect the use of sex hormones could create a health threat like Britain's Mad Cow Disease.

Amida Vol 5 No 1

TREVOR PAGE / PANOS PICTURES

TRADE

Don't be so fussy

Bolivia tells European nut-eaters to calm down

THE gathering of wild Brazil nuts in pristine Amazon rainforest provides a livelihood for thousands of families in the poorest hinterland regions of Bolivia, Peru and Brazil. Now health concerns over the consumption of a range of food products has lead to tough new EU limits that jeopardize many families' survival.

The nutcrackers – Brazil nuts sweeten life in Bolivia.

EDWARD PARKER / STILL PICTURES

Regulations for lower permissible levels of aflatoxin fungus contamination came into effect on 1 January this year, seriously impeding nut exports to European markets. The new limits could sound the death knell for communities that depend on the income from the nut harvest, and may lead to less eco-friendly exploitation of the forest, such as hunting and the logging of hardwood trees.

'The ecological importance of eating Brazil nuts has not been sufficiently emphasized,' says John Nittler, adviser to Bolfor which is a Bolivian sustainable forest development agency. The economic benefits available from collecting the nuts has helped to preserve some of South America's last virgin forests. The Brazil nut tree cannot be cultivated, as it depends on associated forest species for pollination and the seeding of its fruit. The tree grows to 50 metres in height and takes some 45 years to produce a first crop. In areas where forest conditions are altered, nut production quickly falls.

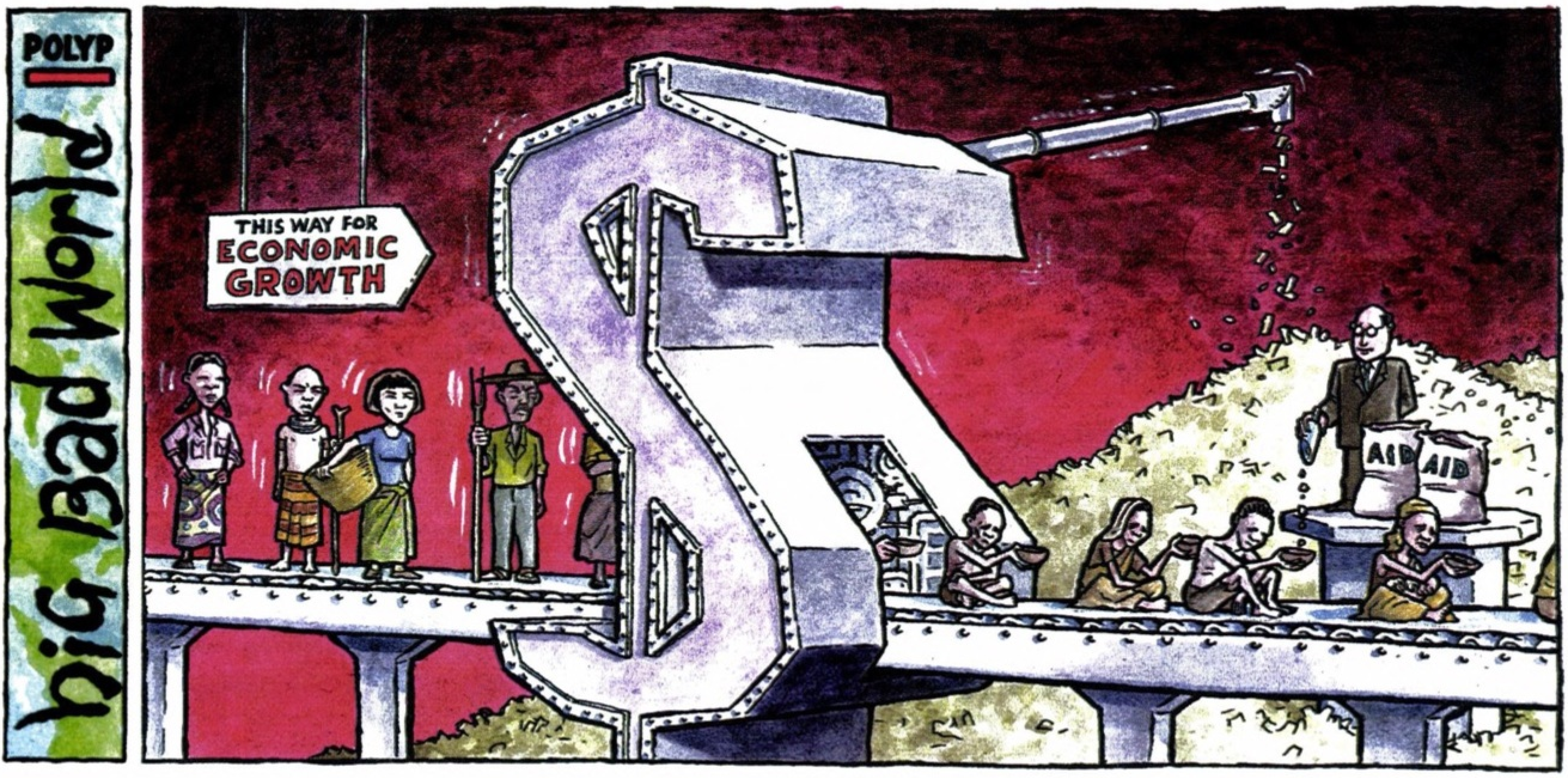
Reasons for the EU's action stems from evidence that aflatoxin contamination produces carcinogenic toxins, once a major problem for the commercial peanut industry. US regulations stipulate a maximum level of twenty parts per billion (ppb) for aflatoxin and there are no plans to lower this. However, the EU's more stringent level of just four ppb cannot be justified, opponents claim. In the case of the Brazil nut, the low level of its consumption in the average European diet makes any risk negligible, critics argue.

Aflatoxin thrives in the humid tropical forest environment. Nuts can only be collected once they have fallen to the forest floor and can often lie for months before gathering, exacerbating the potential for infection. The wet rainforest makes it difficult to keep gathered nuts dry and thereby prevent the fungus from spreading.

The world's largest producer of Brazil nuts is actually Bolivia – it exported over 70 per cent of the world's total supply last year. Nut collection and processing provides over 45,000 families with their principal livelihood. The country has lodged a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the EU measures with little effect. For its part, the EU has failed to consider the impact of the new regulations on South America's poorest country, but it is also unlikely to assist while the WTO action is still pending.

Development agencies believe Bolivia must drop its legal action and formally request help from the EU. Most urgently needed is technical aid to improve nut harvesting methods and the screening of nuts for contamination prior to export. 'If a number of shipments of contaminated nuts reach European ports there is the danger of a food scare and an outright ban being imposed,' said one development aid worker. ■

Philip Withers Green


POLYP
big Bad World
THIS WAY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH
AID
AID

Update

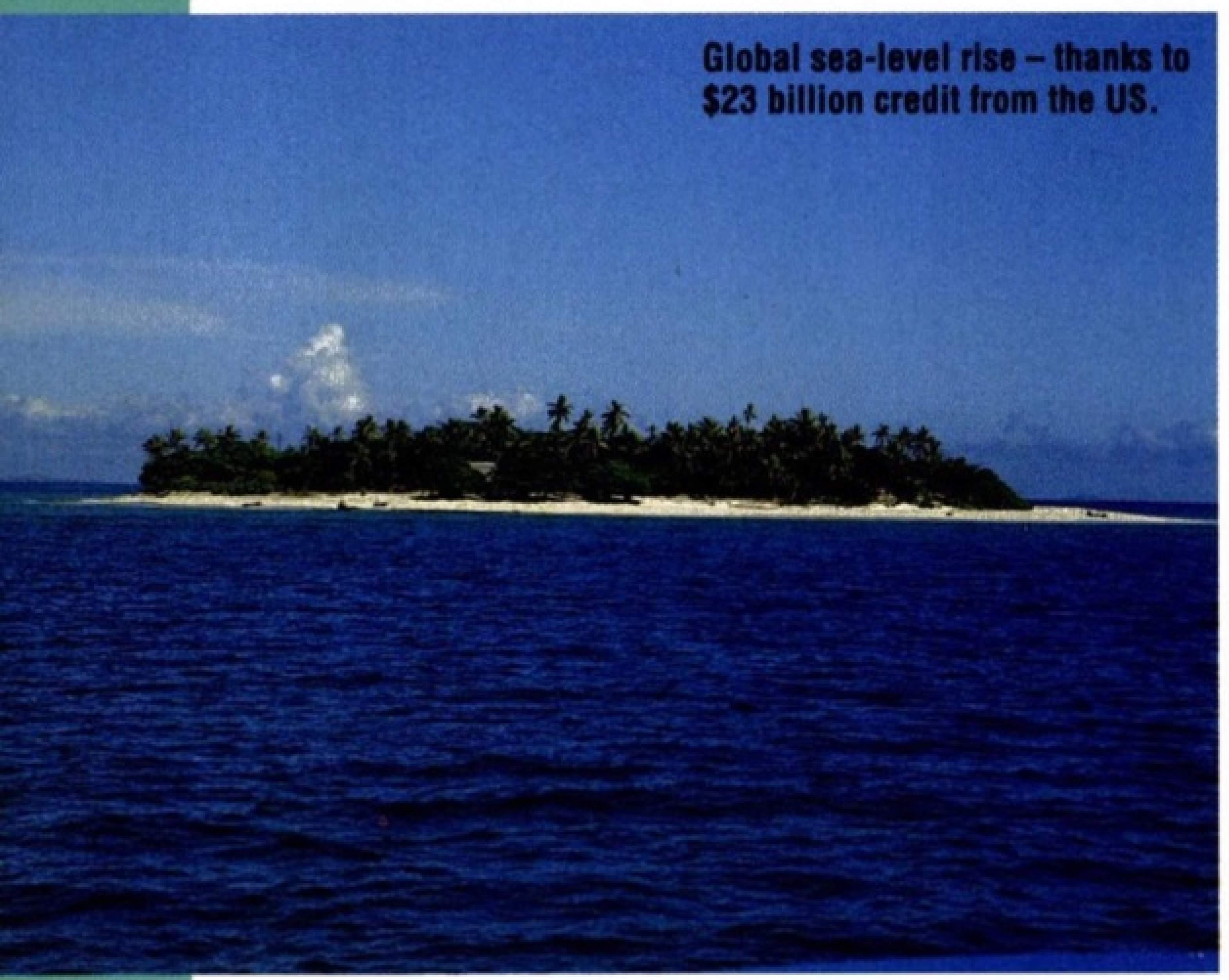
ENVIRONMENT

Money talks hot air

Climate change is being made in the USA

The US Government's export credit agencies have financed fossil fuel projects around the world worth $23 billion between 1992 and 1996 – ignoring the fact they release the heat-trapping 'greenhouse gases' which are blamed for global warming, says a new environmental report. *Business as Usual*, produced by the Institute for Policy Studies and Friends of the Earth, says this funding for coal-fired power plants and oil and gas extraction projects by the US Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), contradicts stated US foreign policy objectives to reduce the reliance of developing countries on fossil fuels and to limit climate change.

During the life of these projects, some 25.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide – equivalent to total global greenhouse gas emissions for 1996 – will be released into the atmosphere. Most scientists believe that these gases (produced through burning oil, petrol, coal and other mostly carbon-based fossil fuels) have been gradually warming the earth's atmosphere and altering its climate.


Global sea-level rise – thanks to $23 billion credit from the US.

DAVID RANSOM

The money went in the form of loans, investment guarantees and insurance designed to help US companies compete for business. The US rate of financing outpaced the World Bank, which underwrote $13.6 billion in financing for such projects between 1992 and 1998. And the US finance was much more than the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which provided $1.2 billion in loans for fossil fuel projects between 1992 and 1997.

In Indonesia, for example, the two agencies committed a combined $1.47 billion in support of the 4,920 megawatt Paiton coal-fired power complex, despite Indonesia's massive natural gas reserves, according to the report.

Ex-Im has been similarly devoted to fossil fuels in China, committing a combined $1.66 billion toward the development of seven power plants in the country over six years. Six of these were coal fired while only one was fueled by gas.

If current record-breaking warming trends continue, average global temperatures could rise between 1 and 3.5 degrees centigrade by the year 2050, according to some estimates.

Daphne Wysham, energy policy analyst with Washington-based think-tank the Institute for Policy Studies concludes: 'OPIC and Ex-Im are guaranteeing climate change for all of us.' ■

Drillbits and Tailings Vol 4 No 7/Inter Press Service

Divine signs

Ad-writers are being asked to play God in Dallas, US. For weeks the 'God Speaks' campaign has been creating billboard messages alongside the city's highways such as: 'Keep using my name in vain, I'll make rush hour longer – God' and 'What part of "Thou Shalt Not" did you not understand? – God'. But, according to a Gallup poll, the campaign may just be preaching to the converted: 63 per cent of Americans said they believe religion can solve the vast majority of today's financial problems, a percentage that has remained stable for 30 years. Over 70 per cent of Americans are members of a church or synagogue and 40 per cent attend regularly. So it is perhaps not surprising that the 'God Speaks' campaign is going international. Its organizers say the messages are non-denominational and should be meaningful to anyone who believes in a Supreme Being.

Economist Vol 350 No 8112

East Asia executes most

On a proportionate basis Singapore hangs more people than any other state – on average one person every nine days; 40 a year since 1994, according to Amnesty International. Singapore beat the US in 1994 in absolute numbers executed, 76 to 31, despite the fact it has only 3 million people compared to the US's 265 million. And, because many Singaporean executions are not publicized, Amnesty reckons its figures could be underestimates. Most of those executed in Singapore are not nationals but often Thais or Malaysians convicted of smuggling drugs (half a kilo of cannabis carries a mandatory death sentence).

Asia accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the world's executions. China executes 2,000 people a year and all members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) retain the death penalty.

CAMERAPRESS

Waiting for the hangman – China executes 2,000 people a year.

Economist Vol 351 No 8113

Jabbed for genes

A new personal security alarm has been designed that has an auto-injecting needle to collect a DNA sample from an attacker. The American invention would only have useful samples if the assailant were one of the 141,600 violent or sex offenders catalogued in the FBI's National DNA Index System or the equivalent state databases which contain around 260,000 records. But politicians and police advocate adding DNA samples of non-violent criminals to their databases. And New York City Major Rudolph Giuliani says he wants to obtain genetic fingerprints of all the city's newborns. Meanwhile, the inventor of the new device, Bob Smith, says his product is the defense of the future: 'It could go so far it's unreal!'

Mother Jones/April 1999

Quote

'I'd certainly kill him if I could.'

Former bodyguard of
Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

SKYVISUAL / JULIAN COTTON

Mindgames

It's just a short step from political propaganda to corporate public relations – **Richard Swift** weighs the implications for democratic debate.

ALBERTA'S romance with cowboy capitalism has proved a resilient one. Oil-rich and staunchly conservative, it is hard to find a more corporate-friendly jurisdiction – certainly not in Canada, perhaps not in all of North America – than here, in the eastern shadow of the Rocky Mountains. The corporations, particularly the oil and gas industry, are most grateful. To hear them tell the story, as their public-affairs flacks are only too happy to do, a prosperous partnership is based on responsible self-regulation and 'freeing enterprise' for the good of all. And it's not just words. The PR people point to a corporate-led volunteerism which supports everything from local theatre and museums to large hospitals and universities. Oil men – they are, almost invariably, men – sit on Boards of Governors, organize charity drives. They have wiped the mud off their cowboy boots long ago to become polite corporate citizens. Some companies, like Shell, present themselves as great defenders of nature and endangered species. Others, like Syncrude – the first company to go into Alberta's vast oil-shale fields, where reserves exceed those of Saudi Arabia – champion native art and culture.

But trouble is brewing in paradise. Wayne Johnston's voice breaks frequently as he tells me the

BEWARE OF THE MOUNTING ANGER OF THE LOCAL RESIDENTS! ABANDON ANY THOUGHT OF FURTHER GAS & OIL EXPLORATION IN THIS AREA!
Laissez-Faire

For the Johnstons (right) and Weibo Ludwig and his family (left), oil company pollution is a matter of life and death. They see gas flaring (photo previous page) as one of the main dangers.

TOOKER GOMBERG (LEFT) AND RICHARD SWIFT (RIGHT)

story of his dealings with Big Oil, an unwelcome guest on his ranch in the Alberta foothills for more years than he cares to remember. Johnston is a sturdy, self-reliant man now plainly agitated. He sits at one end of the kitchen table, his wife Ila at the other. Wayne reels off the names of all the companies he's had to deal with over the years. Some, such as Shell and Amoco, are major global players. Others I'd never even heard of. The number of them here has exploded from 70 to more than 1,200 in the past decade. The pipeline leaks were bad enough – the Johnstons claim one of them killed 30 head of cattle. But what really bothers them is the air pollution. It's associated with the 'flaring' of superfluous but deadly sulfuric (H_2S) 'sour' gas. The Johnstons have had a lot of health problems with their cattle, particularly with pregnancies and calving. They are also worried about their own health.

They have wiped the mud off their cowboy boots long ago to become polite corporate citizens

Ila can hardly speak. I ask her about her persistent pneumonia. She shakes her head: 'My lungs just aren't what they used to be.' As if on cue, the phone rings and she goes over to answer it. 'That was them again. We'll be getting intermittent flaring from compressor number nine, which is just across the fence.'

Rural Alberta is mostly farmland owned by people like the Johnstons. The province is at the heart of Canada's oil patch and is dotted with hundreds of thousands of oil installations. It has been drilled with more than 230,000 wells, plays host to some 760 gas plants and is crisscrossed by 300,000 kilometers of pipeline. Farmers simply have no choice. In return for financial compensation – for loss of land use, and sometimes intermittent work tending oil facilities – they have to let the companies in. After all, this is a $26-billion industry. It owns or leases subsurface rights, provides 20 per cent of the provincial budget and is a big backer of Premier Ralph Klein's ruling Conservatives.

If the farmers fight back, as the Johnstons have done, they are quickly branded as 'troublemakers' trying to ruin the productive partnership of industry and community that is the centrepiece of energy-industry public relations. Then the stick replaces the carrot. Companies refuse to pay compensation. Whispering campaigns isolate 'troublemakers'. According to Wayne: 'There are some neighbours that just try and avoid me now. Most of them have the idea that you can't do nothing, so you might as well collect the couple of bucks they give you and forget it.'

Martha Kostuch has learned first-hand how the industry plays hard ball. Martha is a vet in the town of Rocky Mountain House, known locally as 'Rocky' because of its fabulous backdrop of snowcapped mountains. Kostuch is a persistent thorn in the industry's side. She has seen the effects of air pollution on the health of the cattle from nearby ranches; effects that are now being verified by scientific studies. She says that, despite the PR spin by Big Oil to appear friendly to farmers and nature alike, 'their image has always been poor'.

Kostuch has been involved in several law suits and studies about shoddy environmental practices or inadequate legal processes. One of these efforts led to an investigation of the Shell gas plant in Caroline following complaints about poor air quality. Kostuch approached some 25 experts in the province to help her study these effects, but no dice: 'I was told, if they work for me they'll never work in this province again.' Kostuch says that behind the companies' sunny 'partnership' image lurks a strategy of 'intimidating, blacklisting and threatening'. She points to calls in the middle of the night, locks changed on the doors of meeting halls, out-of-court settlements with gag clauses to keep people quiet. Still Kostuch is optimistic. She feels industry has to listen more these days because 'the public is simply less willing to accept impacts, and more willing to speak out'.

Things have indeed gotten very lively in rural Alberta. In the Peace River district the Alberta Energy Company (AEC) is facing off with a farmer named Weibo Ludwig, a leader of the communal Trickle Creek Farm and an outspoken critic of Big Oil. 'The Peace' has witnessed a spate of eco-sabotage – sometimes known as 'monkey-wrenching' – of isolated oil-company facilities. Although nothing has been proved, the industry plainly believes that Ludwig is involved. He too has cause for complaint: his farm is surrounded by gas flares. Already there have been three miscarriages and one still birth amongst the dozen or so women at Trickle Creek.

Then, last fall, an AEC oil site was bombed. Six days later the company sponsored a tour of local communities by an 'anti-terrorism' expert from the Mackenzie Institute in Toronto – one of those 'strategic studies' institutes that provide a haven for right-wing propagandists. According to Ludwig's Edmonton lawyer, Richard Secord: 'Some of the locals were ready to go down the road and lynch Weibo from the nearest tree.' The industry strategy of defaming and isolating critics reached a new level. Shortly after that, Ludwig and another Trickle Creek farmer were arrested on various 'soft' conspiracy charges relating to sabotage.

When Richard Secord tried to get his clients out on bail, he told me, he was shocked to read the Crown's disclosure information – the bomb had been planted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), in collaboration with the AEC. This had been done, they claimed, in an attempt to catch the saboteurs. The shit hit the fan. According to Secord: 'The media were particularly annoyed, having chartered a plane and being toured around the bomb site by both the company and the cops.' Oil pollution became the main story, rather than 'ecological terrorists' – a 'deniable' local problem turned into a Canada-wide issue. The spin strategy had gone badly off the rails and turned into a PR nightmare for the industry.

Things got even uglier. When I turned on the TV news, back in Toronto, I was confronted with the image of Ludwig's bombed-out truck in the parking lot of the Comfort Inn in downtown Edmonton. Apparently, persons unknown had planted a bomb in the truck and blown it up, with Ludwig only yards away.

Out in Alberta I had met with the Rimby and District Clean Air People, one of the growing number of groups that has sprung up in rural areas to address issues of oil pollution. I asked how they felt when the story of the RCMP/AEC bombing broke. Answers varied. For some it was outrage. Others were awed by the power of an industry that can enlist the police, the Government or whoever in their cause. Some felt the industry as a whole would not condone such activities and had been embarrassed by them. None of them was in the least discouraged from carrying on their own activism. Their frustration focused as much on the failure of under-funded government regulators as it did on the oil companies themselves. According to Gord Laxer of the Parkland Institute, a research centre at the University of Alberta, public-royalty rates on oil and gas are three times higher in Norway and 1.75 times higher in Alaska. Yet Alberta's right-wing Premier always insists: 'We have no revenue problem, only a spending problem.'

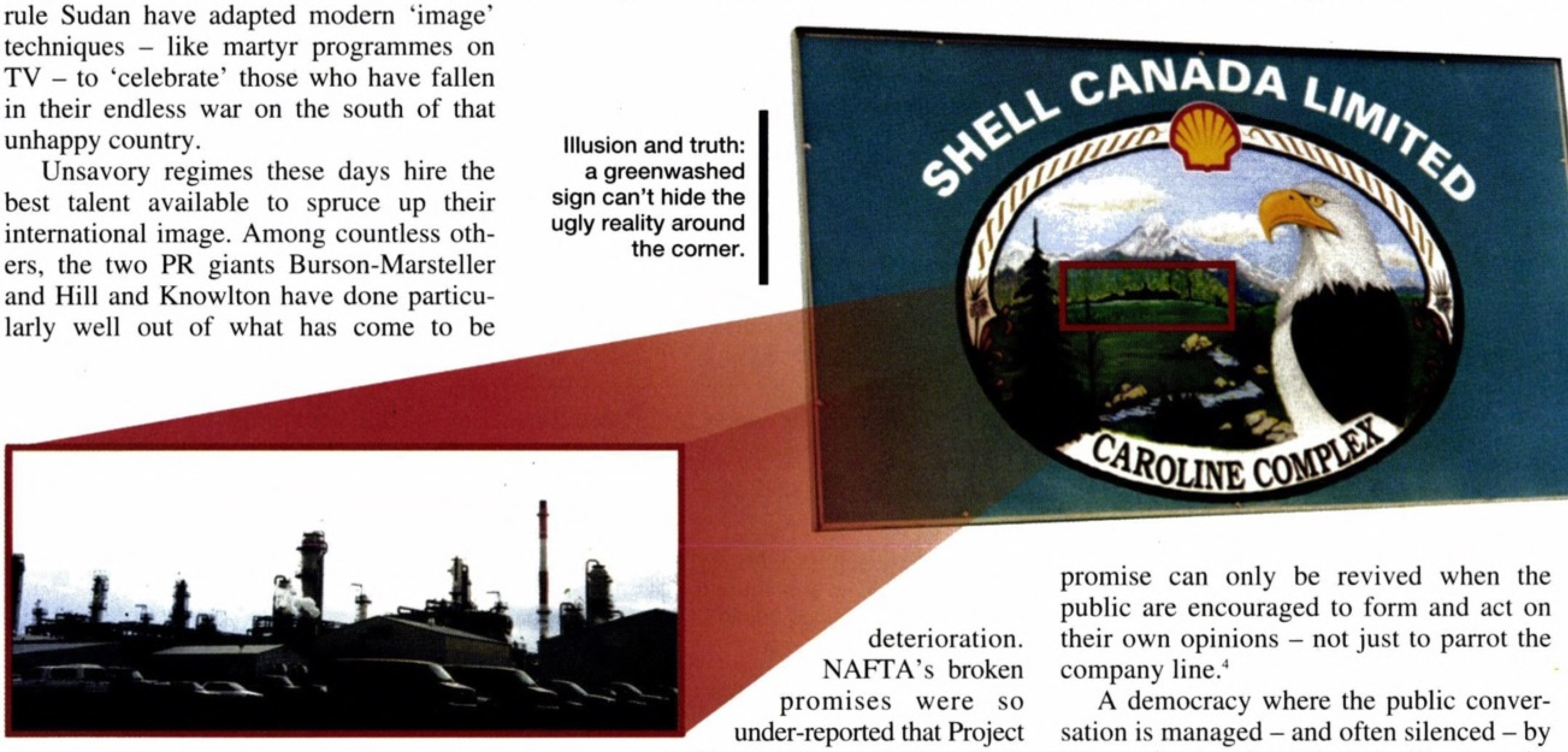
What, then, does the case of the Alberta have to tell us about corporate PR? One lesson is that most PR strategies have two faces. While industry may prattle on about partnership and responsibility, come a challenge and the gloves are off. Dialogue dissolves. 'Isolate and Intimidate' is the name of the game.

In a sense, we have all come to live in Alberta. The vast increase in corporate and government PR worldwide means that those with power are falling over themselves to let us in on the good things they are doing for us. They are also quick to disparage both the intelligence and the motives of their critics. Billions are spent each year on this effort. The New York-based *O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms* lists hundreds of companies with offices around the world. Interspersed among the corporate profiles are ads promising the world to prospective clients – 'Reach the press without stress' or 'Your PR agency has an office in Cairo run by a guy named Al'. Overheads are low – a computer bank, some telephones, a bit of high-priced 'creative' – so profits are high. Over the past two decades, growth in this sector has run at three times the level in the overall economy. And the actual PR firms are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. To get a complete picture, you have to include the PR departments inside every major corporation, a growing industry of professional spin-doctors on whom most politicians with any cash pin their hopes. Then add a plethora of pollsters, tele-marketers, focus-group organizers, think tanks and related 'policy consultants'. It's an enterprise whose collective purpose is to 'administer' democracy, eliminating risks for clients. The key 'project' is not to reform reality, but to manage our perceptions of it.

The key 'project' is not to reform reality, but to manage our perceptions of it

All this adds up to a propaganda effort of major proportions, undermining the cherished democratic belief that each citizen has the right to make up their own mind. When George Orwell wrote *1984* back in the late 1940s he saw the major threat to democracy as a kind of sinister totalitarianism. Brainwashing was backed up by the fear of police jackboots on the stairs. This is the classic image of propaganda usually associated with the heavy hand of the state. But PR gurus have transformed the propaganda industry, making

Lively debate in Dhaka, Bangladesh: modern PR is no substitute for democratic dispute and the public opinion of the streets.



Illusion and truth: a greenwashed sign can't hide the ugly reality around the corner.

RICHARD SWIFT

its two faces much more subtle and user-friendly. Positive images of home and family, a trusted public figure, the wisdom of your grandparents or the inevitable bounty of progress are used to convince. There are negative threats to our economic well-being, if we get too squeamish about downsizing, privatization, environmental problems or child labour in Southeast Asia.

The original Orwellian nightmare still holds true in parts of the South. In places like Burma and Sudan, pro-regime propaganda is of the classic variety; a tightly-controlled media, streets adorned with huge billboards setting out the parameters of acceptable thought. Yet even the fundamentalists who rule Sudan have adapted modern 'image' techniques – like martyr programmes on TV – to 'celebrate' those who have fallen in their endless war on the south of that unhappy country.

Unsavory regimes these days hire the best talent available to spruce up their international image. Among countless others, the two PR giants Burson-Marsteller and Hill and Knowlton have done particularly well out of what has come to be known as 'the torturers' lobby'. Their job is to represent regimes such as Turkey, Indonesia, Nigeria, Kenya – or the military regime in Argentina during its Dirty War, when the 'disappeared' were being snatched off the streets and dropped from helicopters over the Atlantic.[1] The PR technique is simple enough: minimize the human-rights abuses, talk about it as a 'complex', two-sided story, play up efforts at reform, speak of all the positive 'modernization' that is going on and – most of all – the crucial economic stake 'we' all have in Nigerian oil or Indonesian markets. If possible, it is best to put these words in the mouth of some apparently 'neutral' group of 'concerned citizens', or a lofty institute with academic credentials.

A lot of this kind of PR is done directly by the major corporations that have a stake in the South. The recent decision of Shell Oil to spend $32 million cleaning up its image, after widespread environmental damage and complicity in human-rights abuses in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, is a classic case. The alter-image-not-reality approach has lead to an international campaign by the Boycott Shell Organization which sends postcards to CEO Jack E Little demanding: 'Why is Shell spending $32 million to clean up its image, not its mess in Nigeria?'

Perhaps the biggest – and certainly the most expensive – PR effort on a Southern issue was the campaign undertaken by the Wexler Group for the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico in 1993. Wexler worked for a coalition of Fortune 500 companies to reassure a worried US public about job losses and environmental deterioration. NAFTA's broken promises were so under-reported that Project Censored named them 'one of the top-ten censored stories of the year', just one year after Wexler's successful sales job.[2]

The Australian analyst of corporate propaganda, Alex Carey, divides it up into 'grassroots' and 'treetops' varieties.[3] The first – like that in the Alberta oil patch – is either aimed at local communities or broad public manipulation. The second is primarily aimed at élite decision-makers. Together they make up a huge amount of public discourse on major political issues. Corporations hold that this is a legitimate cost of doing business. But it is hardly a contest of equals. The massive resources at the disposal of the corporate élite hugely outweigh the voluntary effort of citizen-activists trying to put the opposite case. It's as if a public meeting to make an important decision were attended by two or three people who are allowed to shout at the top of their voices, while the rest are forced to communicate in a barely audible whisper. Democracy it ain't!

Carefully-crafted soundbites from the powerful are a poor substitute for the rough-and-tumble of real democratic dispute. The expensive techniques of corporate PR are now exercised at the cost of other people's right to free speech – the democratic dice are loaded. Little wonder that many are becoming cynical and apathetic, sinking into a tranquilized silence. Why bother voting? Why bother speaking up? Why bother having an interest in anything but private pleasures and worries? And it's not just ordinary folk. Contemporary theorists of democracy are preoccupied with what has gone wrong, and how to set it right. From Robert Dahl to Norberto Bobbio, they feel the democratic promise can only be revived when the public are encouraged to form and act on their own opinions – not just to parrot the company line.[4]

A democracy where the public conversation is managed – and often silenced – by PR professionals and their ilk must be resisted. Even in unlikely places like the Alberta oil patch, it is possible to outsmart them as they trip over their own arrogance. Perhaps corporations should be expelled from the political process entirely and restricted to the narrower business aims for which they were originally incorporated. But, however it is done, it has to be done. Included in the rich legacy left us by the cultural critic Raymond Williams are these words: '[We] must get rid of the idea that communication is the business of a minority talking to, instructing, leading on the majority... the false ideology of people who are interested in communications only as a way of controlling people, or of making money out of them.' ■

---

[1] John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, Maine 1995. [2] Nancy Snow, *Propaganda Inc*, Seven Stories Press, New York, 1998. [3] Alex Carey, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, University of Illinois Press, 1997. [4] Stephen Coleman, *Stilled Tongues*, Porcupine Press, London, 1997.

The propaganda industry

'Right now the environmental movement is a perfect bogeyman for us. In order to get people to join and donate money [to us] we need opposition.'[1]

Alan Gottleib, Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise and a propagandist for the Wise Use movement

'Failing to provide witnesses... will lead to media efforts to obtain interviews on their own, either outside the gates or at the local watering hole. Control is the important element here.'[2]

Harold Burson of Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest PR firm

'Persuasion, by its definition, is subtle. The best PR ends up looking like news. You never know when a PR agency is being effective; you'll just find your views slowly shifting.'[4]

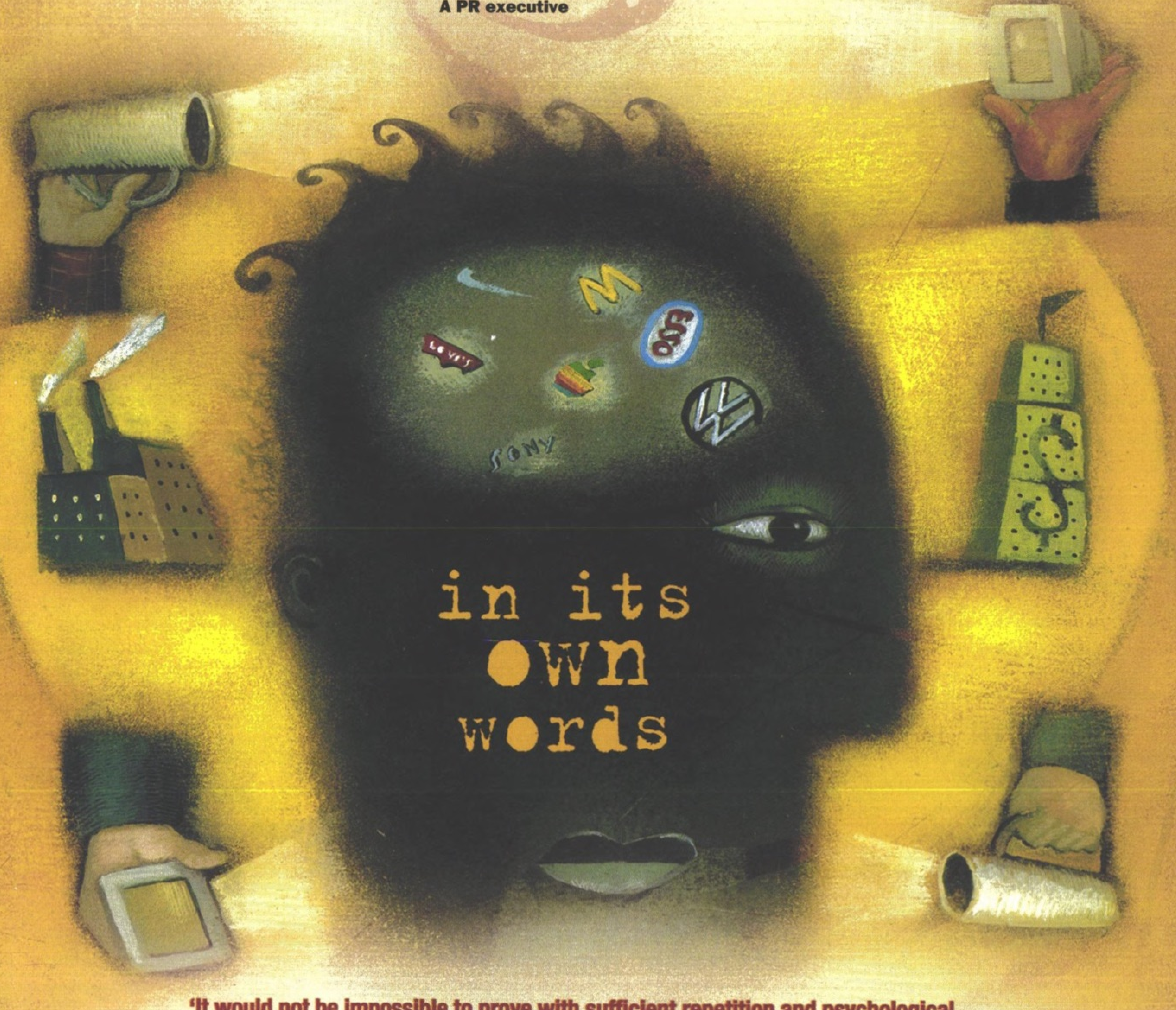
A PR executive

'The daily tonnage output of propaganda and publicity... has become an important force in American life. Nearly half of the contents of the best newspapers is derived from publicity releases; nearly all the contents of lesser papers... is directly or indirectly the product of PR departments.'[3]

Fortune magazine 1949

'Activists who want progress have to reward progress... I certainly remember that I became a feminist in order to get laid. The women I found attractive liked feminist men. So I thought, "Well, I know I can do that", and you know it worked on them and it worked on me.'[5]

Peter Sandman, PR Consultant



in its own words

ILLUSTRATION: STEPHANE DENIS

'It would not be impossible to prove with sufficient repetition and psychological understanding of the people concerned that a square is in fact a circle. They are mere words and words can be molded until they clothe ideas in disguise.'

Joseph Goebbels

---

1 Beder, Sharon, *Global Spin*, Chelsea Green Books, Vermont, 1997 **2** Beder, op.cit. **3** Beder, op.cit **4** Stauber, John, *Toxic Waste is Good for You*, Common Courage Press, Maine, 1995 **5** *PR Watch*, First quarter, 1999.

PROPAGANDA

CHILE

Peddling miracles and amnesia

Who worries about human rights when you've got double-digit growth? **Alejandro Reuss** investigates the shifting PR campaign to justify Chile's 'economic miracle' and to forgive its chief architect.

SEPTEMBER 1976. A car bomb planted in Washington DC by the Chilean secret police (known by its Spanish acronym DINA) kills the exiled Chilean socialist Orlando Letelier and his American colleague Ronnie Moffit. Letelier, a former cabinet minister in the Government of President Salvador Allende, overthrown by the Chilean military three years earlier, was one of the dictatorship's most prominent critics. The double murder would become one of its most notorious crimes.

February 1999. Arriving home one night I catch the end of a news report featuring Francisco Letelier, an artist and one of Orlando Letelier's sons. His parting words stick with me. What is 'at stake', he says – presumably in the legal case brought against Chile's former dictator Augusto Pinochet in Spain and Britain – is the 'future of Chile'. An unexpected turn of events in London has called that future into immediate question. Chile's arrogantly insubordinate armed forces now watch helplessly as their maximum leader, Augusto Pinochet, is brought to heel. They will no longer strut about with the same air of invincibility.

W. HERNAN
QUIROZ P.
DISAPPEAR
SEPT. 73
LOS ANGELES
RAYENCO

JULIO ETCHART / STILL PICTURES

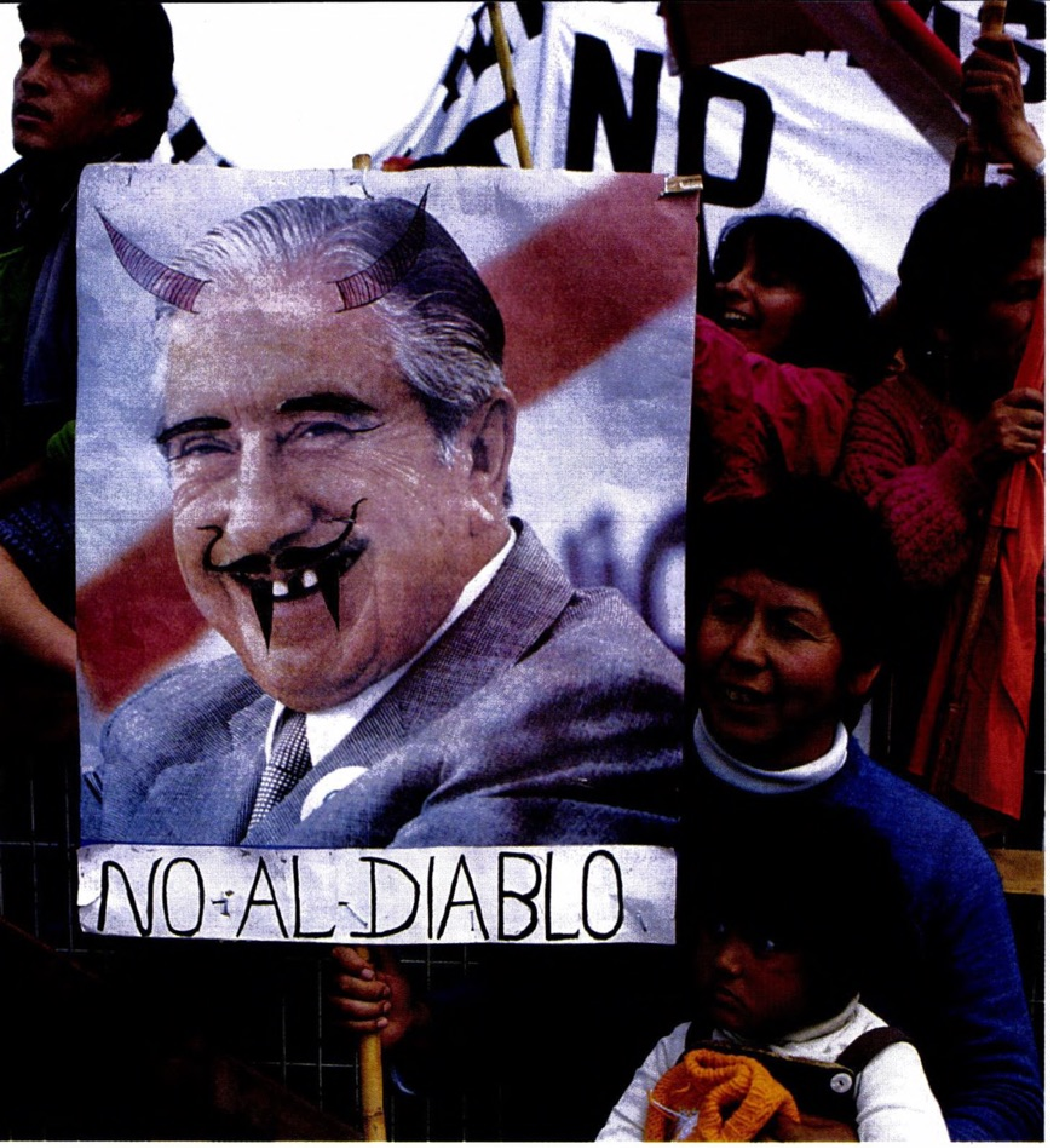
Dignity and witness: forgotten in the boardrooms, remembered on the streets.

In the decade since Chile's return to civilian rule, the military dictatorship has received a great deal of favourable press, mainly for its free-market economic policies. Praise for the neoliberal economic program has filtered through the mass media in reports which, even if critical of the dictatorship's authoritarianism, give it credit for bestowing on Chile a modern, dynamic economy. The article by Jon Lee Anderson in the 19 October 1998, issue of *The New Yorker* is a snapshot of the prevailing ambivalence on the eve of Pinochet's arrest in London. Anderson, best known as the author of *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, on balance neither celebrates nor denounces Pinochet. The article, entitled 'The Dictator,' includes due criticism of the dictatorship, especially of human rights. It also includes praise for the economic results obtained by Pinochet and company. Anderson paints a picture of a bustling new Chile, with its high-rise office buildings and shopping malls. 'The country that the new democratic leaders inherited,' he says, 'is prosperous and forward-looking.' Even his description of the slums which ring Santiago, and the legacy of inequality they symbolize, do not prevent him from saying, 'Pinochet's most substantial claim to being a good leader is that he oversaw the Chilean economic miracle.'

By October 1998, the 'Chilean economic miracle' was widely reported in the mass media as the dictatorship's main legacy – undoubtedly to the delight of the dictatorship's celebrants. Pinochet's arrest, however, upset the apple cart. The current international campaign in defense of Pinochet, scrambling to whitewash the dictatorship's crimes, has thrown in everything including the kitchen sink. Sometimes it seems that in one breath Pinochet's defenders say that he did nothing and yet that 'it was necessary'.

The Chilean 'economic miracle' has figured less prominently in this campaign than one might expect. Instead apologists for the dictatorship have largely returned to the claim, vintage 1973, that the coup of 11 September saved Chile from Soviet- or Cuban-sponsored dictatorship. Perhaps they felt that with the re-emerging details of the thousands either tortured, executed or disappeared a high rate of economic growth might seem a somewhat hollow justification. Business people associated with Chile's Augusto Pinochet Foundation are bankrolling the campaign in defense of Pinochet. Bell Pottinger, the public-relations firm headed by longtime Conservative PR guru Sir Tim Bell, worked under a $310,000 contract with the Chilean Reconciliation Movement, a pro-Pinochet organization operating in Britain. The firm had previously worked for the 1989 presidential campaign of Hernan Buchi, the dictatorship's Finance Minister and its candidate in Chile's first presidential elections since 1970. Bell Pottinger has sent 14 postcards, in the name of the Chilean Reconciliation Movement, to 5,000 British 'opinion makers' (including the heads of the top 2,000 corporations, the members of the Houses of Commons and Lords, and the major news media). The buzzword of 'reconciliation' appears frequently, and several of the cards argue that Chileans are entitled to and have in their majority chosen reconciliation over 'recrimination' and revenge. But the content of the postcards is hardly conciliatory. Clanging relentlessly through the campaign is the claim that in 1973 the elected Chilean Government was raising paramilitary forces in order to establish a communist dictatorship – this is their justification for the military's violent seizure of power and dictatorial rule.

Tim Bell's public-relations expertise was also employed for a televised meeting between Pinochet and Margaret Thatcher in the house where the ex-dictator is confined. The meeting was arranged by Robin Harris, a senior advisor to Thatcher. Harris has also produced and sent to over 5,000 UK 'opinion formers' (the same 5,000 as the postcards, perhaps?) a paper entitled 'A Tale of Two Chileans: Pinochet and Allende'. Harris's paper rehearses the same accusation as the postcards – President Allende had planned a 'self-coup' with dictatorial aims. Over half of the paper's footnotes cite a document produced by the dictatorship with CIA assistance shortly after the military coup. Harris also promises shortly an appendix detailing 'Plan Z,' the fictitious plot under



JULIO ETCHART / STILL PICTURES

Ohh! Scary! – little sympathy for the devil in the squares of Santiago.

which Allende and his associates were to eliminate an extensive list of enemies including prominent members of the armed forces.

The apologists of the dictatorship accuse the Left of crimes in fact perpetrated by the Right. On the lurid accusations of 'Plan Z', there were two current or former commanders-in-chief of the Chilean Armed Forces assassinated during the 1970s, but they were not assassinated by the Popular Unity. General Rene Schneider was murdered in 1970 during a failed kidnapping by right-wing military conspirators who planned to blame the crime on the Left in hopes of scuttling Allende's victory at the polls. General Carlos Prats was assassinated in 1974, after his exile to Argentina, by agents of the military dictatorship. Both were despised by the Right for their 'constitutionalist' scruples.

The military dictatorship was also no stranger to hit lists. A Chilean friend of mine, a student at the time of the military coup, described to me going to his university on 11 September 1973, to find his name on a posted list of those sought by the military. After his arrest, he was tortured and subjected to mock executions, and eventually exiled. Many of the others on such lists, of course, were disappeared. When the pro-Pinochet campaign makes the conciliatory-sounding suggestion about suffering on both sides, it is to imply a false symmetry. It was the military dictatorship which turned the soccer stadiums into concentration camps, which strung torture chambers along the entire length of the country, and whose crimes include thousands murdered in state custody and tens of thousands tortured. And, of course, it was the Chilean Armed Forces, not the Popular Unity, which perpetrated a coup and established a dictatorship.

The current campaign is not the first project in which the public-relations industry has served Pinochet and company. In fact, the military dictatorship directly employed numerous PR firms to polish its image over its 17 years. Starting in 1974, a US organization called the American-Chilean Council began work with the aim, in its own words, 'to expose the misinformation, gross exaggerations and downright lies [about the Chilean dictatorship] being fed to the American public through the Left/liberal establishment'. Four years later the American-Chilean Council was revealed, in a lawsuit filed by the Justice Department, to be working in the pay of the dictatorship, basically as a front for the public relations firm of Marvin Liebman Inc.

In subsequent years, many public relations firms did register as agents of the Chilean dictatorship, and documented their activities on its behalf. From 1985 to 1990, for example, the Embassy of Chile paid Worldwide Information Resources (WIRES) over $600,000 for 'public affairs counsel and services'. WIRES produced press releases and 'media advisories', 'identified and contacted journalists who might be interested in writing sympathetic op-ed articles,' and drafted speeches and arranged media appearances for officials of the dictatorship. The firm also handled behind-the-scenes lobbying in favour of Pinochet. WIRES's access to power is evident not only from the list of public officials lobbied, but also the chummy tone of the communication. In February 1987, the firm's chair, Richard J Whalen, sent a letter lobbying for the sale to Chile of replacement parts for US-made military jets to such officials as the Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the Senior Director for Latin American Affairs. Each was addressed by first name. Whalen personalized the copy sent to Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams, one of the architects of the Reagan administration's Latin America policy in the era of the covert wars in Central America: 'You gave an excellent account of yourself in opposing the House ultra-liberals the other day. Keep smiling and swinging!'

These PR efforts are undoubtedly just the tip of a very large iceberg. The public relations industry, meanwhile, is itself only responsible for a fraction of the pro-dictatorship message. Right-wing commentators, think-tanks, and academics have all played their role in the 'molding' of public opinion.

The current campaign is not the first project in which the PR industry has served Pinochet and company

It would be a mistake to assume that the public has received these efforts with passive acceptance. In 1993, the Maine public relations firm of Holt, Hughes and Stamell received a $2 million contract from Chile's first civilian government to influence US public opinion. The Government sought to change its image after finding that 'many Americans either did not know where the South American country was or had a bad impression of it because of the 17-year dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.' After years of propaganda much of the public was evidently not buying or else forgetting. Perhaps the 'opinion molders' – the government officials, corporate functionaries and media commentators – absorbed the pro-dictatorship propaganda to a greater extent than the 'moldees'. Unfortunately, even in democracies, this is often all that is necessary. ■

Alejandro Reuss was born in Chile and now lives in Boston where he is a member of the editorial collective of *Dollars and Sense* magazine.

Celebrity spin

LAKERS
8
adidas

Adam Porter ducks and weaves around basketball superstar Kobe Bryant, on tour to promote Adidas sportswear to the celebrity-hungry youth of Manila.

Kobe Bryant could be just any old 20-year-old multi-millionaire basketball star destined for sporting immortality. But there is more to him than that. Because when the LA Lakers' number eight steps outside the US to visit Manila, the capital of the Philippines, he becomes an unwitting participant in a global sneaker war that encompasses poverty, strikes, the whole of Asia and your bunions.

Kobe belongs to Adidas, the transnational sporting giant originally coming straight out of Germany. He has signed a $10 million deal to promote the shoe manufacturers across the world, and in the Philippines he has the world's second-largest basketball market ready to samba under his every jump. The Philippines is utterly basketball mad – a legacy of American involvement that included driving off the Spanish imperial rulers in 1898 and the less successful Japanese in 1945. Today, basketball isn't just the major sport, it's the only sport. Bryant's arrival at the ridiculously luxurious Peninsula Manila Hotel is heralded by banners, fans, film crews and a phalanx of tussling Filipino snappers. As he steps out of the crushing 75-per-cent humidity into the marbleized foyer's mother-of-all air conditioners he takes about two-and-a-half giant strides to cover the 50 metres to the lift.

Bryant visits a shopping mall – a consumer oasis in a desert of poverty and chaos – to play exhibition 'street' basketball, where three players on each team play into one hoop. He is promoting the Adidas Streetball World Tournament, with finals in Paris. When we get there the place is heaving with at least five thousand basketball maniacs craning to get a glimpse of their hero. Look upwards into the atrium and all you can see is four floors of faces. Kobe plays up to them, he flips and dips, dunks and schmunks. At one stage I'm sure the ball is attached to his hand by a piece of elastic. The place goes mad.

In the Philippines he has the world's second-largest basketball market ready to samba under his every jump

'How does it feel to be loved that much?' I ask him later.

'I can't take it all in,' he replies, 'I just can't do it. I was trying to, standing there looking at all the faces. I was saying to myself "take it in! take it in!" But it was incredible. In the States people get excited, but not like this. The adrenaline rush was awesome, total. I've never experienced anything like that. Manila, it's amazing, just amazing.'

Indeed it is. Bryant is whisked away from the popstar bedlam, occasionally stumbling over a few desperate fans. Bryant could be shot, stampeded or just eaten by the crowd. Adidas' investment could go up in shreds. But Bryant remains as cool as he can. Smiling as he goes.

Adidas are smiling too. Great profits are a matter of sophisticated yet simple technique. Basically what Nike, Adidas and the other shoe giant Reebok do in production is to subcontract. They sign contracts with shoe manufacturers to put together all the component parts of the shoe. This means that they can search for the best deal in a highly fluid manner. If someone's costs are too high, or become too high, then you go elsewhere, right now.

As Adidas' Asian co-ordinator, Claire Gilpin, pointed out to me: 'Our Korean operation is getting a little sticky at the moment.' She means, of course, that the workforce want a union. The advent of global capital means that the shoe makers – like everyone else who trades on the global stage – can move their money around the world with hardly any trouble. As Thomas Jefferson once pointed out: 'Traders have no soil of their own; they go where the profits are.' Impoverished people and governments in the Third World beg for their cash. Like the kids on the streets of Manila or Jakarta, the ones who come up to you with eyes a-doed and hands outstretched: they may be degrading themselves but, boy, are these fuckers poor.

Manila is home to around ten million people. About half of them live in a kind of poverty that is difficult to describe. You need to smell it to understand. The mixture of sweat, shit, rotting vegetation and spices is sweet and penetrating. It clings to you like the kids in the Barrios. I recognize that smell. It smells like slums the world over. I

Kobe Bryant: Adidas' man on the run.

ACTION IMAGES

have smelt it in Africa and in Latin America. I was shocked this summer when I went to the World Cup and smelt it in shanties outside Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence.

The mother-of-all air conditioners doesn't smell like that. Inside the Peninsula Manila's foyer restaurant – one of four grandiose Western-style eateries – sit a hundred replica Ferdinand and Imelda Marcoses. Dripping in opulence, like its guests, the Peninsula Manila is the smartest hotel I have ever been to. Even the sand in the hallway ashtrays has the Peninsula's trademark three Ps stamped in it every day.

Half-a-mile away outside Pasai, the banking and commercial centre pockmarked with giant skyscrapers and glowing foreign-bank signs, are the disused railway tracks where thousands live in total degradation. A giant and unwanted population. A massive vat of cheap labour (if only they had any) and a place in which to fall if your job moves elsewhere. To China or Vietnam for example. These are the people global capital uses and spits out. The people the scabs exploit.

PETER BARKER / PANOS PICTURES

Hoop dreams find fertile ground among the basketball-mad youth of the Philippines.

I am stampeded for my British Airways complimentary washbag and a few sweets from the hotel. I stand on a little girl's bare foot and she cries. But everyone wants to talk to us, everyone smiles. The children are beautiful but damaged, fluent in three languages – English, Spanish and Vasaya, one of the 70 Filipino dialects – and we have a laugh marching up and down for half an hour chanting 'Big stick! Big stick!' as one of the kids, Joseph, wields the said stick at the front of the group. Then I get in my air-conditioned cab that costs fuck-all to hire – and leave them forever.

I go to chat with the Philippines Sports Commission. I meet Commissioner Teresita 'Tisha' Abundo and ask her whether or not big sports companies are a good influence in the Philippines.

'Oh yes, we need their money,' she says, smiling. But she doesn't seem to care much for that subject. 'I was a model, you know, for Christian Dior,' she tells me. 'I love the Philippines, it is easy to be rich here. I don't want to have to clean my own clothes or do my own cooking. You can have a maid here very cheap, you know.'

'I love the Philippines, it is easy to be rich here...You can have a maid here very cheap, you know'

She is a member of the new Government of President Joseph 'Erap' Estrada – a former film actor and action hero. In return for Imelda Marcos not standing as a Presidential candidate, Estrada cancelled the search for the missing billions of dollars of Filipino money in her possession.

Kobe Bryant has been invited to the Presidential Palace in Old Manila to meet Estrada. Past a few shanties just outside the gates of the compound we enter a world of visible opulence. Range Rovers, Mercs, mobile phones and well-pressed shirts are the order of the day. Kobe is half -an-hour late as the traffic and pollution in Manila are quite incredible – an hour and a half to go five miles.

Kobe's Mum has been crying at the poverty she has seen. Kobe has 'never seen anything like it' and he vows to 'tell everyone when I get back to the States'. The President waits for Kobe Bryant. When it comes, the photo-op is great, it makes all the papers the next day, with the Adidas basketball prominent in the shots, as Kobe and the Prez clown around. Then Adidas give 'Erap' a couple of holdalls full of goodies, and we leave.

Juancho has no goodies. He is angry. He has been waiting with his two boys outside the Don Bosco Church housing project for street kids. So have many others. They are waiting to see Kobe, who is visiting the three-story building about five minutes' walk from the hotel. Adidas bring Kobe in by car convoy round the back way, avoiding the waiting fans. The genial, gentle basketball child, unaware of the commotion outside, dwarfs most of the Filipino adults, so he towers over the hundred or so kids from Don Bosco. He dances and plays with them, completely at ease. They are all dressed in Adidas T-shirts. The invited Filipino press snap away.

Philip Go makes a speech to the kids. 'If you work hard you can achieve anything you want in life,' he says. I'm not sure he really believes that. I don't think he would make the same speech in the Barrios – they would laugh their rags off. The hired security is everywhere, to keep the people excluded. Security like Sylvia, the hopeful Olympic bodybuilder who guards Kobe's beautiful mother Pamela; and Zimmer, the half-Chinese, half-Austrian giant who looks like he could pull your spine out if he got pissed off with you. Outside, a young girl called Twinkle (yes, really) is crying with joy – she gave me her camera to take into the building to snap Kobe for her. 'Thank you, thank you,' she splutters as I go out to give it to her. As I turn to go back in I am tapped on the shoulder. 'Adidas is bullshit,' says Juancho, still outside. 'Bullshit. They just selling shoes.'

In the end I ask Bryant what he thinks of all this American achieve-your-dream fantasy-world tripe. Does he truly believe that all the kids from the shanties he saw from his limo could really become Kobe Bryants if they worked hard enough? Aren't they more likely to end up stitching his shoes together at Adidas's factory in the Maktaan Export Processing Zone – a tax-break area for big companies – rather than stitching up ball-bouncing opponents? That is if they are lucky.

The answer was depressing but predictable: 'I do. If they work hard enough. If they take their goals one by one, then they can achieve. I think so.'

On this sort of nonsense the busines community and their well-rewarded, often unthinking supplicants have built a world. For themselves. ■

Adam Porter is a freelance journalist who was until recently a contributing editor of *GQ Magazine* in London.

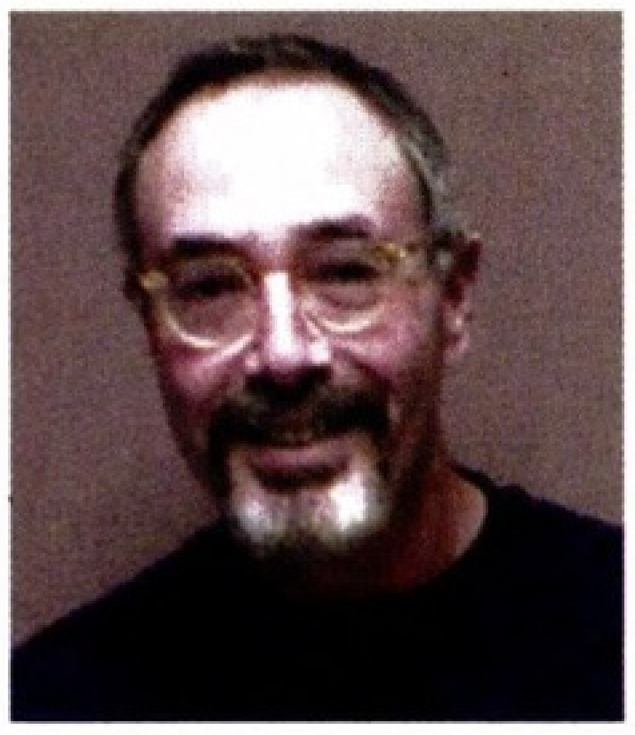
Richard Swift talks with **Stuart Ewen** about the origins of

One-trick po

Q: Can you identify the beginnings of the modern Public Relations industry?

A: To some extent it came from the growth of democratic outrage against a society in which democracy didn't function very well. In the 1870s Standard Oil seized what had been a very localized petroleum industry. This kind of monopoly was taking over in other industries including steel, meat packing, sugar – often extractive industries. The term 'robber baron' dates from this period. Implicit within it is the idea that democratic movements had struggled for centuries to wipe out a landed aristocracy and were now finding this new corporate wealth functioning with little sense of accountability to anybody. These corporate barons were seen as a throwback to pre-democratic tyrannies. It was a period in which the working class was very, very poor, without any kind of social safety net. Also the traditional middle class, once staunch defenders of private enterprise, began to feel that publicity was needed to expose the outrages of the business class. This was the birth of the 'progressive' movement.

By the end of the nineteenth century the idea of government intervening to regulate and set boundaries on private wealth was coming into fashion. It has been an issue in US society ever since. In the face of this challenge certain industries do battle with a kind of counter-publicity to convince people that unfettered private enterprise is in everyone's best interests.



Ewen's lifework analyzes the way commercialism distorts communications.

Q: If you trace the periods of innovation in corporate PR throughout this century, are they connected to periods of popular resistance?

A: There is no question. Corporate PR has been reactive to situations when public hostility forced them to filter their practices to present themselves as operating in the public good. This is usually a defensive response to democratic outrage over business practices. The 1930s and then the 1960s were periods in which the challenge to the business system became widespread. If you want to see the flowering of corporate public relations strategies look at the decade following those periods. After World War Two a kind of gung-ho corporate public-relations strategy tries to present the private business system as the quintessence of the American Way – a kind of commercialistic rendition of democracy. This became almost a national ideology used to roll back policies and ideas that came out of the 1930s New Deal – for example, the very idea that government might compete with business by providing public housing. In the 1960s people began to wonder if democracy was being violated by a destabilized business system. In the 1970s and 1980s, with the triumph of Reagan and Thatcherism, there comes to fruition a set of national public relations strategies catalyzed by the political issues of the Sixtes.

Q: Can you trace the intellectual roots of corporate public relations?

A: There are two trajectories of intellectual influence. The first wave of PR strategy, like ATT's effort to convince the US public it should have a monopoly over all wired communication, is in the tradition of rational reportage. It was a question of laying out facts to persuade people the corporate position was in their best interest. It wasn't particularly successful.

Meanwhile, another intellectual tradition began to raise its head in the late nineteenth century. It has as its founder a French sociologist named Gustav Le Bon who wrote in 1895 a book called *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind.* Le Bon was an anguished French middle-class academic who saw the growth of democratic politics and the old systems of hierarchy and deference breaking down. Particularly after the Paris Commune of 1871 he felt that the mob at any moment could seize society and destroy all he held sacred. Le Bon starts to examine the social psychology of the crowd. For him the crowd is not driven by rational argument, but by its spinal cord. It responds solely to emotional appeals and is incapable of thought or reason. Somebody interested in leading the crowd needs to appeal not to logic but to unconscious motivation. For Le Bon, the most effective way to do this is through the use of images. In a period of great social turmoil Le Bon's ideas began to have a tremendous impact. *The Crowd* was available in 19 languages a year after publication. In the US it influenced everyone from Teddy Roosevelt to the founders of the modern PR movement. By the First World War rational journalistic PR gave way to a propaganda designed to pluck people's heartstrings.

Le Bon writes with the working-class

PHOTOMONTAGE: RICHARD SLYE

the PR industry and its implications for democratic debate.

mob in mind, but by the 1920s his ideas are applied to virtually everybody. Almost no-one is seen as capable of rational thought. The most efficient way to win hearts and minds is through emotional appeals. By the 1920s, Le Bonian social psychology is used to design organizations that constantly take the temperature of public feelings. Survey research, polling and focus groups are all built around the science of how to lead the public mind. Since the 1920s this stuff has become the fabric of everyday life. Today the main way we see the public expressing itself is as a kind of statistical applause track of polling results in the headlines. The work of this apparatus has become a substitute for any meaningful form of public expression.

Q: Do you see a connection between the US PR industry and the classical Nazi uses of propaganda?

A: Certainly, in terms of propaganda strategies, the Nazis learned a lot from what was going on in the United States. Walter Lippmann, despite a reputation as a great democratic thinker, advised Woodrow Wilson that if he wanted the US to join the First World War he would have to create a vast propaganda apparatus. Wilson had run for office on a platform of opposition to the War, but three months later had changed his mind. He needed to overcome significant resistance from large sectors of the US population. In the week following the declaration of war Wilson created The Committee on Public Information (CPI) headed up by a journalist named George Criel. The CPI mobilized virtually every form of public influence – teachers, journalists, commercial artists, advertising and theatrical people. Children were encouraged by essay contests supporting the War. In movie theaters people stood up before the show started to give pro-War speeches. It's a system of total propaganda aimed to monopolize each moment of public attention. It approximates to what happened (at least on the level of form) in the Nazi period. Hitler himself, in *Mein Kampf,* makes reference to the US propaganda apparatus as a decisive factor in the War. He was inspired by it.

It was in the post-War period that the PR industry, the advertising industry, the press agent industry, what the psychologist Robert Shalldini calls 'the compliance industries', really took off. These things grew exponentially in the 1920s in the US and provide the world with a model – and the world of course includes Germany. Goebbels himself was a reader of the work of Edward Bernays. Bernays was Freud's nephew on both sides of his family. Here is a guy for whom the idea of the unconscious was his mother's milk. What makes Bernays important is that he is the first PR guy to apply social psychology strategically and use theories of the unconscious in propaganda technique. Bernays is no mere theorist. He put his ideas to work for a number of corporations as well as for government.

Q: You claim in your book that the plethora of demographic research and polling has a fragmenting effect on society.

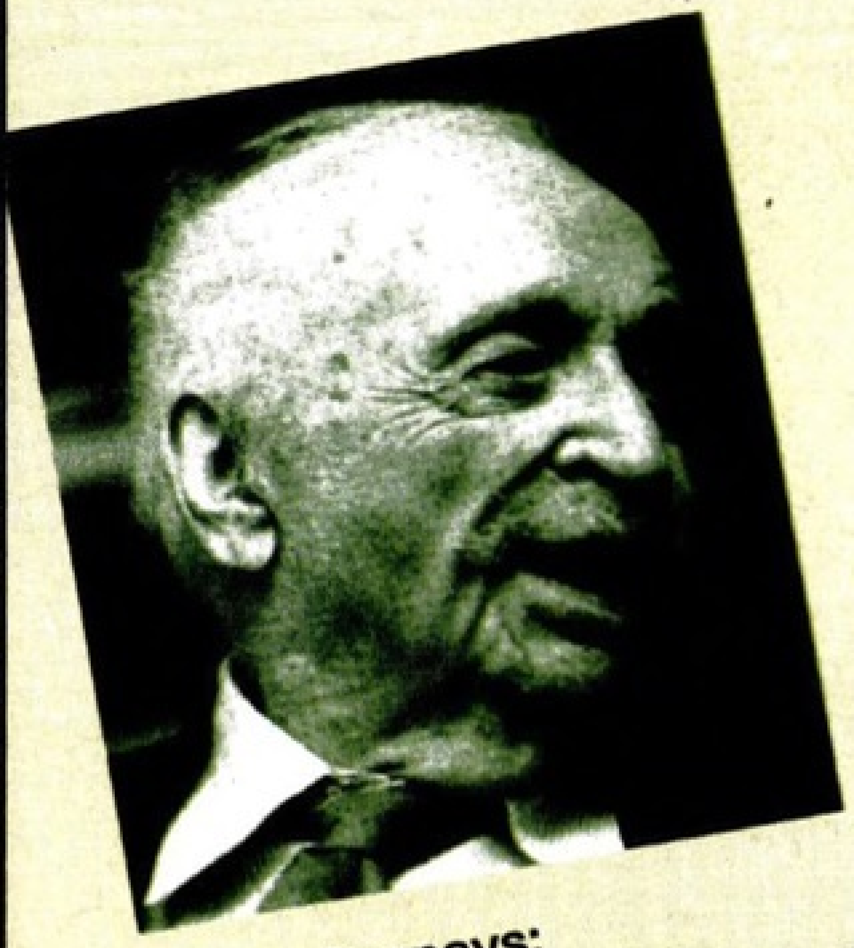
A: You have pollsters and demographers going around asking people questions, usually more about what they feel than what they think. From that fairly fragmentary data they put together an agglomeration called 'public opinion'. But there is no real public opinion; it is just something assembled from fragmentary bits. It may be helpful for a leader wanting to sell a particular policy or the next war. But this kind of 'public' is a manufactured product of a social-psychology industry with little life of its own. My own belief is that in a meaningful democracy the public must experience itself as such. It must be actively engaged in the life of society, in discussion with one another. Answering poll questions in the privacy of your living room is no substitute for discussion in an active public sphere. Without such a sphere the idea of democracy becomes a bit of a joke.

Q: How do you respond to the charge that, after all, 'everything is propaganda' – including your own books. Why pick on the PR industry for its contribution to the 'marketplace of ideas'?

A: The term 'propaganda' at this point is very loaded and doesn't say much about anything. But if you change it to publicity, I wouldn't disagree. Putting ideas out there for discussion has had an important role in the history of the last few centuries. The US Declaration of Independence is an example – but it assumed an intelligent public and was laid out almost like a legal brief. I don't have any problem with the use of publicity. My main concern is that publicity should be used in a way that assumes that people are capable of thought and appeals to them at that level. Also the public sphere must not be owned and dominated by small concentrations of private wealth. That is the real danger in our time. What happens if these are the only voices in town? What happens once the entire communications system is owned by five or six large international corporations exercising control over who gets seen and what gets heard? My problem is not that we live in a society infused with publicity, but that the publicity is a one-trick pony. It represents only one voice. And the serious discussion of issues gives way to this Pavlovian attempt to make people salivate. It's publicity which is completely degraded, devoid of content. And the primary idea PR tries to sell is that the market is the only mode of human organization that has any value whatsoever. All other values are driven to the margins. ■

Stuart Ewen is an historian and cogent critic of the impact of advertising and media culture. His most recent book is ***PR: A Social History of Spin, Basic Books,*** New York, 1996.

> 'The twentieth century has been characterized by three develop
> the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate powe
> corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy'
>
> **Alex Carey**, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy.*


Eddie Bernays: the founder of modern public relations

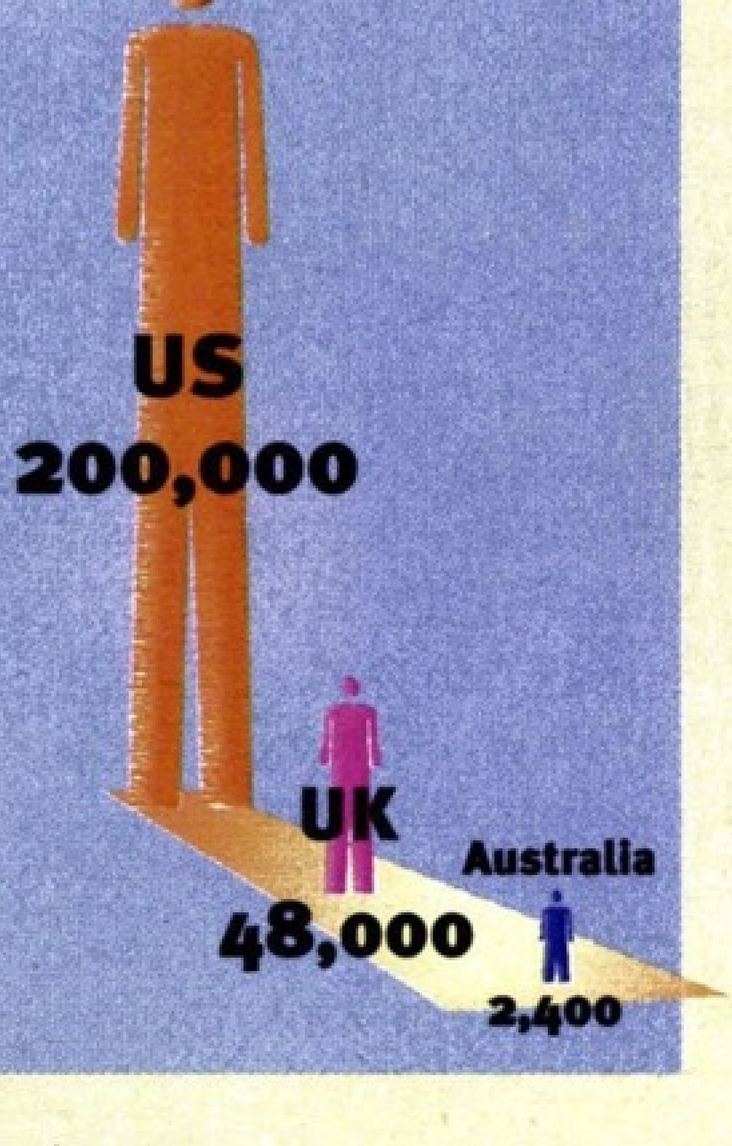
Corporate Profile:
Burson-Marsteller[1]

- ● Biggest PR company with 1998 net fees of $258.5 million.
- ● **Self-Description**: A Global Perception Management Firm.
- ● **Employees**; 2,200 in over 30 countries and 54 offices from Brussels to Bejing.
- ● **Client List includes** Nike, The World Bank, Philip Morris, CARE, Dow Corning, ProChile, Mitsubishi and Mcdonald's.
- ● **Some History**[2]: Helped clean up the image of the Argentinean junta during their dirty war of torture and murder. Worked to build a 'smokers' rights movement' to help Big Tobacco client Philip Morris. Helped Monsanto gain acceptability for its Bovine Growth Hormone. Clients include active supporters of the anti-ecological Wise Use Movement.

Corporate Profile:
Ogilvy PR Worldwide[1]

- ● Ranked #11 with 1998 fees of $77.9 million.
- ● 500 employees, 28 offices, three continents.
- ● **Self-Description**: 'Multinational clients depend on Ogilvy PR to translate brands and messages across cultures and in local markets'. 'In 1633 when Galileo announced that the earth revolved around the sun, he was promptly imprisoned. Too bad he didn't have Ogilvy PR as his Partner in Communication.'
- ● **Client List includes** Chemical Manufacturers Assn, IBM, Glaxo Wellcome, US Airways, US Department of Labour, Forest Products.
- ● **Some History**[2]: Hired by the Nestlé Corporation to implement a strategy of 'pro-active neutralization' to combat critics over the baby formula scandal and other corporate practices.

● The PR industry employs 200,000 people in the US. The PR industry in the UK employs more than 48,000 people, most of them in London. While in Australia there are 2,400 full-time members of the Public Relations Institute.



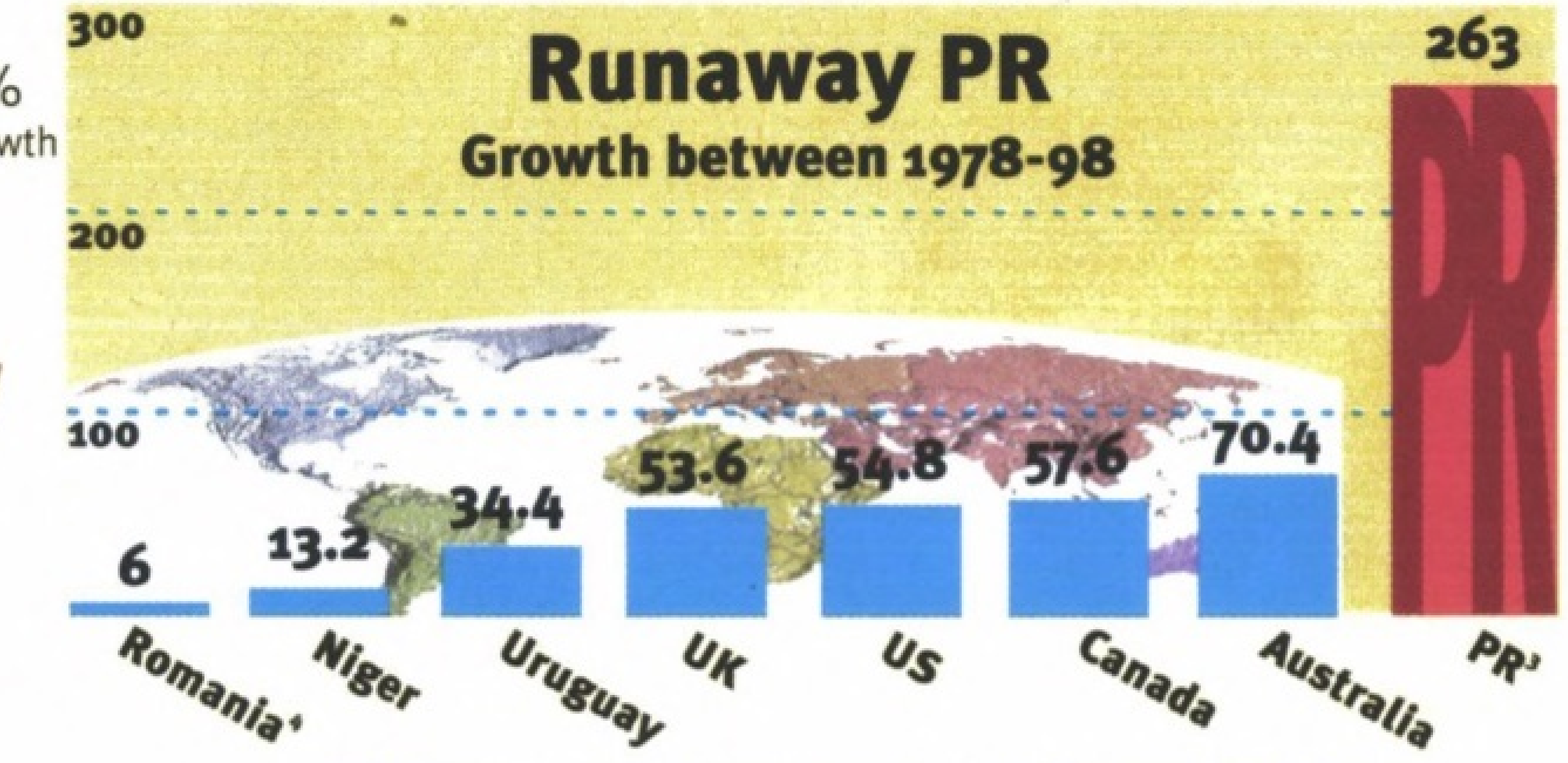
THE FACTS?

THE RIS
Corpora

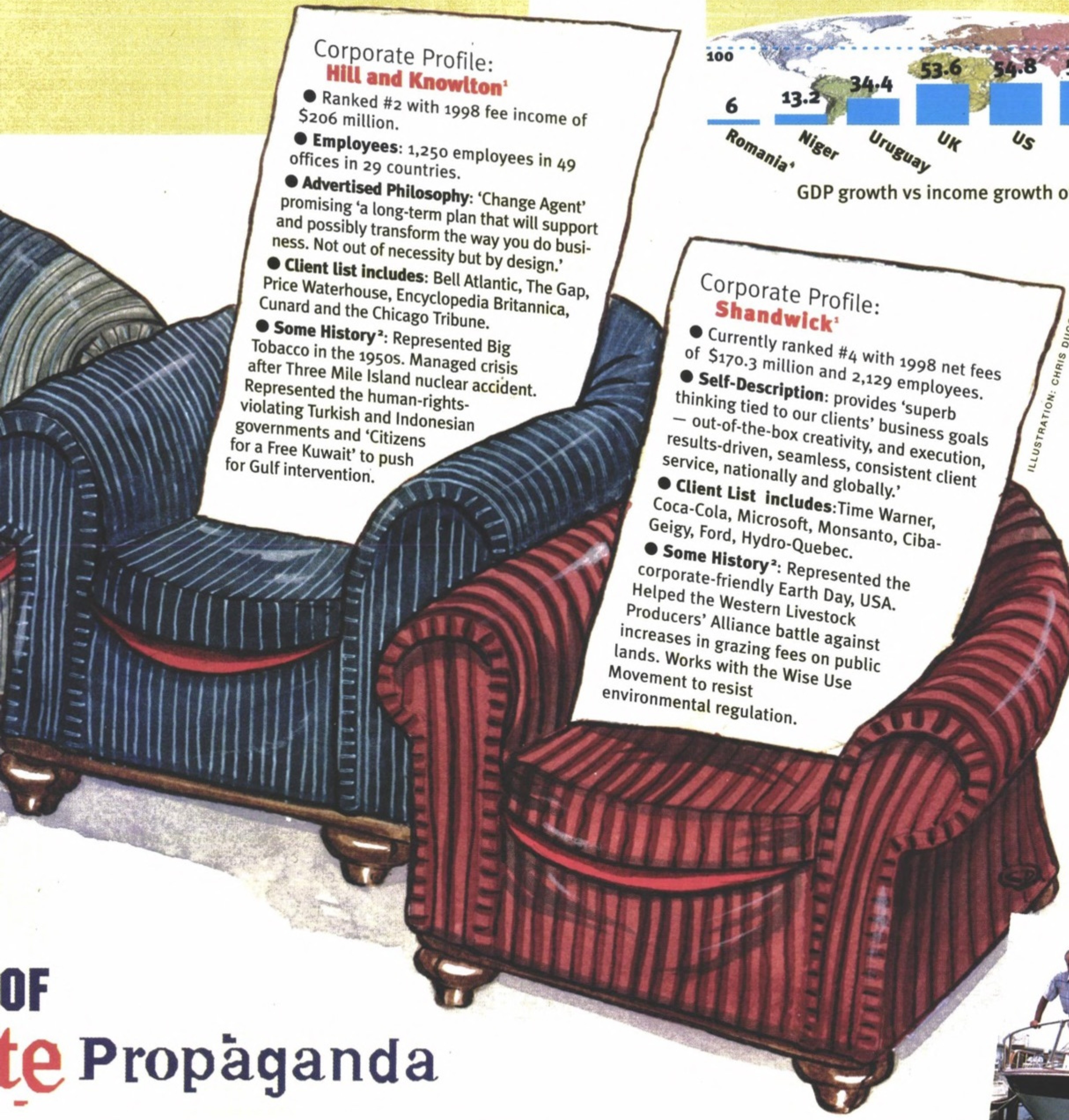
- ● US firms spend a billion dollars every year on anti-environmental 'greenwashing' PR.[5]
- ● By conservative estimate ten billion dollars is spent every year on PR in the US alone.[6]
- ● The US PR firm TJFR Products and Services maintains biographies of 6,000 journalists that can be faxed to corporate clients 'within an hour'.[7]
- ● The Washington-based right-wing Heritage Foundation with a budget of over US $25 million is the country's wealthiest think-tank. Ninety-per-cent of its funds come from just 6,000 private donors.[8]
- ● When Dow Corning faced controversy over its silicone breast implants their PR spend jumped from $6,000 a year in 1990 to nearly four million dollars between May 1991 and February 1992.[9]
- ● Mcdonald's spends $1.8 billion a year on various PR.[10]
- ● An estimated $1.4 trillion is spent every year marketing goods and services worldwide.[11]
- ● Eleven out of twelve of the world's largest PR companies are owned by the advertising industry.[12]
- ● Each of the 20 corporate sponsors of the Atlanta Olympics spent $40 million.

ents of great political importance :

nd the growth of



GDP growth vs income growth of top 50 PR firms



Corporate Profile:
Hill and Knowlton[1]

- Ranked #2 with 1998 fee income of $206 million.
- **Employees**: 1,250 employees in 49 offices in 29 countries.
- **Advertised Philosophy**: 'Change Agent' promising 'a long-term plan that will support and possibly transform the way you do business. Not out of necessity but by design.'
- **Client list includes**: Bell Atlantic, The Gap, Price Waterhouse, Encyclopedia Britannica, Cunard and the Chicago Tribune.
- **Some History**[2]: Represented Big Tobacco in the 1950s. Managed crisis after Three Mile Island nuclear accident. Represented the human-rights-violating Turkish and Indonesian governments and 'Citizens for a Free Kuwait' to push for Gulf intervention.

Corporate Profile:
Shandwick[1]

- Currently ranked #4 with 1998 net fees of $170.3 million and 2,129 employees.
- **Self-Description**: provides 'superb thinking tied to our clients' business goals — out-of-the-box creativity, and execution, results-driven, seamless, consistent client service, nationally and globally.'
- **Client List includes**:Time Warner, Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Monsanto, Ciba-Geigy, Ford, Hydro-Quebec.
- **Some History**[2]: Represented the corporate-friendly Earth Day, USA. Helped the Western Livestock Producers' Alliance battle against increases in grazing fees on public lands. Works with the Wise Use Movement to resist environmental regulation.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS DUGGAN

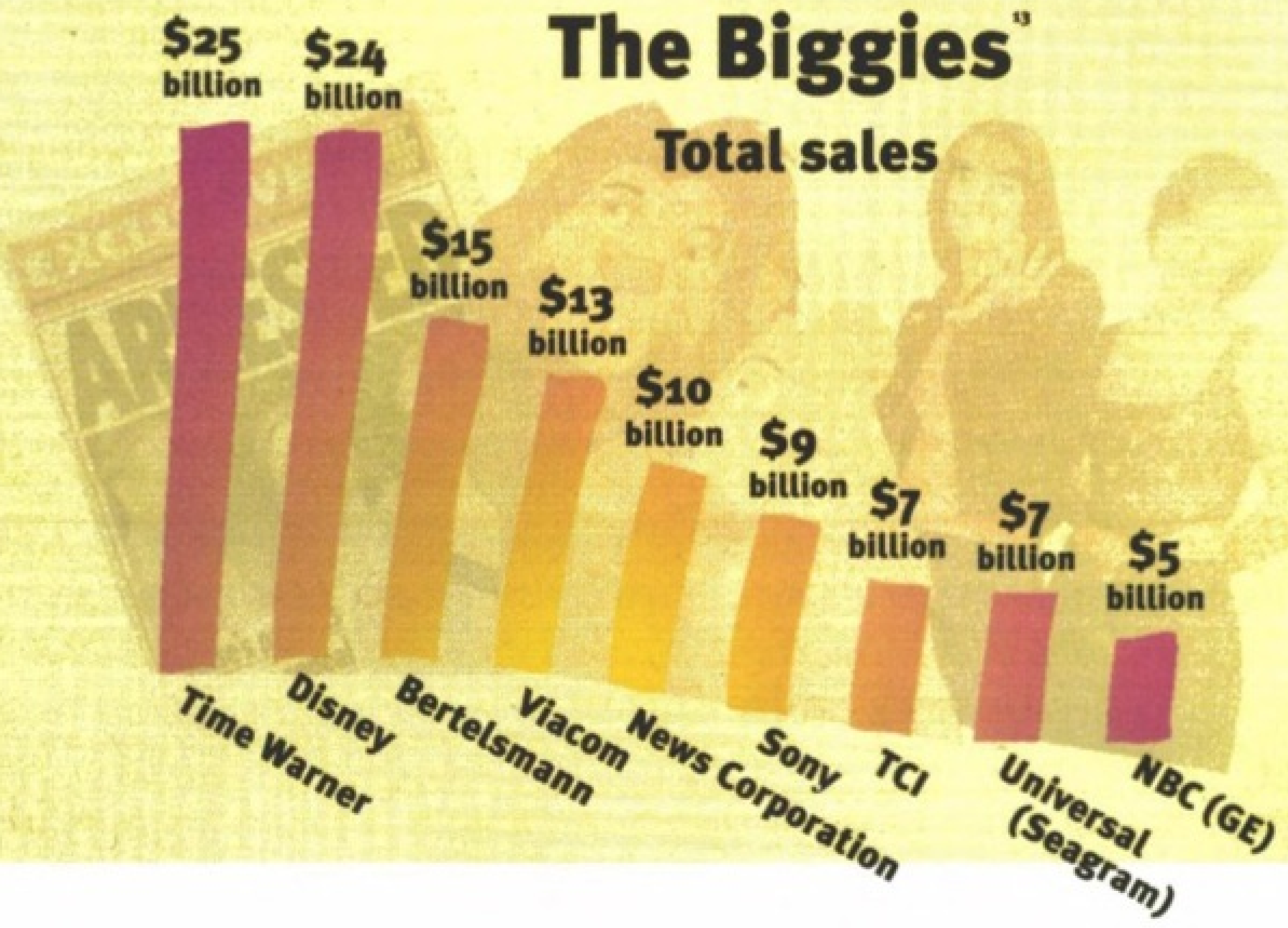
---

1 *O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms*, New York, 1998. **2** Stauber, John and Rampton, Sheldon, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, Maine 1995. **3** O'Dwyer's op. cit., **4** *World Development Forum* 1998. **5** Beder, Sharon , *Global Spin*, Chelsea Green, Vermont 1998. **6** Stauber, op. cit. **7** Stauber, op. cit. **8** Callahan, David, *The Nation*, 26 April 1999. **9** Stauber, John, PR Watch, 1996. **10** Kovel, Joel, Z magazine, September 1997. **11** Cassino, Kim, *American Demographics*, November 1997. **12** O'Dwyer's op. cit. **13** McChesney, Robert, *Extra!* November/December 1997.

OF
te Propaganda

The Global Media System

Fewer and fewer media giants are controlling more and more of what we read, see and hear. The centralization of media power makes the job of corporate PR all the easier. A business-friendly environment, standardization of news and program formats and an occasional 'quiet word' with the editor keep a positive spin on things.



JOHN GARRETT / CAMERA PRESS

GDP Selected Countries

Uruguay — $10 Billion
Ghana — $6 Billion
El Salvador — $9 Billion
Slovenia — $18 Billion
Ethiopia — $5 Billion

ILLUSTRATION: MARGOT THOMPSON

The junkyard dogs of science

In a special report, **Sheldon Rampton** and **John Stauber** expose the shady figures behind the dirty war that's being waged by big business against environmental regulation.

When Hurricane Mitch slammed into Central America in late October of last year, some people sat down and wrote checks to disaster-relief organizations. Others sat down and wrote position papers.

Measured in terms of the death toll, Mitch was the region's worst natural disaster in 218 years. As the hurricane squatted over Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, it dumped some 40 cubic kilometers of water – three-quarters of a normal year's rainfall – in the space of two days. The result was like a tidal wave on land. Flash floods filled rivers with hundreds of times their normal flow. A wall of water swept through the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, destroying whole streets in a matter of minutes. Dams burst. Bridges and highways were swept away.

It was only natural to wonder if global warming was to blame for the disaster. 'This was perhaps what is becoming a typical disaster in today's world of El Niños and global climate change,' observed J Brian Atwood, head of the US Agency for International Development, which co-ordinated relief activities. Speaking to CBS News, he called the hurricane 'a classic greenhouse effect'.

For Patrick J Michaels, people like Atwood are part of the problem. Michaels, a professor of environmental science at the University of Virginia, penned an article titled 'Mitch – That Son of a Gun'. He attacked Atwood's remarks as 'White House huckstering... If there's any possible way to conflate human suffering with global warming, the Clinton administration will do so... Rumors persist that Vice President Gore has been advised to make global warming a central theme of his presidential run in 2000. Threatening hundreds of thousands with imminent drowning unless they vote for him is a crude but probably effective trick.'

Merrill Rose sums it up succinctly: 'Put your words in someone else's mouth'

Michaels' commentary was printed in the *Washington Times* and the *Journal of Commerce*. Rewritten as local editorials, it appeared in newspapers as far apart as the *Wisconsin State Journal* and the *Wyoming Tribune-Eagle*. 'Just how stupid does the Clinton administration think we are?' asked the version that appeared in the *Tribune-Eagle*.

Stupid enough, apparently, that none of these outlets bothered to check Michaels' credentials. If they had, they would have found that Michaels is part of a small but vocal minority of industry-funded climatologists who dispute the mounting evidence which suggests that global warming is a consequence of modern industrial activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels. By his own account, Michaels has received more than $165,000 in funding from fuel companies, including funding for a non-peer-reviewed journal he edits called *World Climate Change*. He has served as a paid expert witness for utilities in lawsuits, appears on television and radio and testifies before government bodies. At the time Hurricane Mitch struck, he was also a 'senior fellow' at the Cato Institute, a right-wing, industry-funded think-tank that campaigns against 'unnecessary' and 'harmful' environmental regulations.

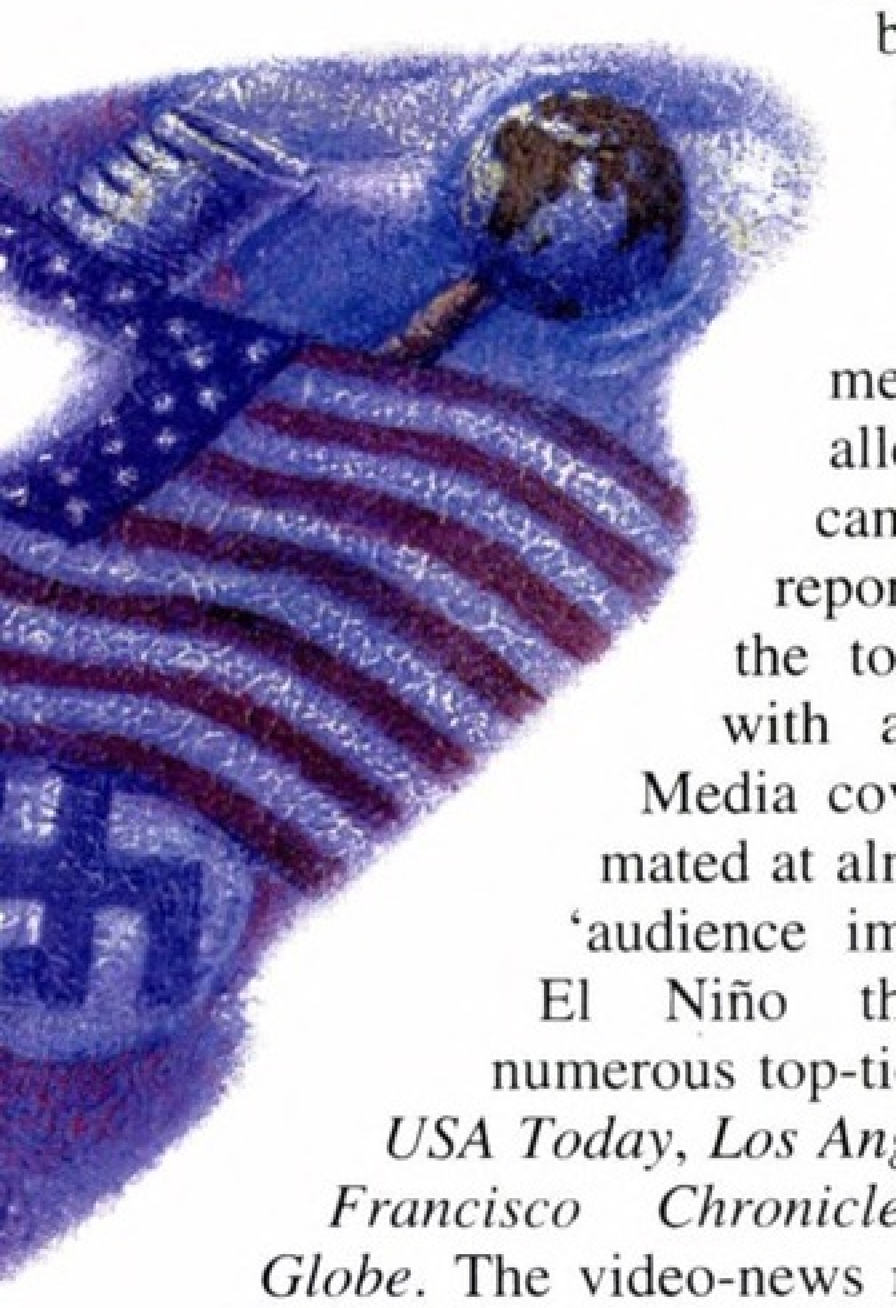
Third-party technique

The use of scientists as spokespersons for corporate interests is an example of a public-relations strategy known within the trade as 'the third party technique'. Merrill Rose, Executive Vice-President of the public-relations firm Porter/Novelli, sums it up succinctly: 'Put your words in someone else's mouth.' Remember the TV commercials with actors in lab coats pretending to be doctors and claiming that nine out of ten of their colleagues prefer a specific brand of aspirin? With commercials you are on your guard. But put the message in the mouth of someone like Patrick Michaels and you have a 'real scientist' speaking. The commercial interests behind the message are much better disguised.

How effective is this strategy? According to a survey commissioned by Porter/Novelli, 89 per cent of respondents consider 'independent experts' a 'very or somewhat believable source of information during a time of corporate crisis'. Sometimes the technique is used to spread doubt about a product's hazards; sometimes it is used to hype or exaggerate benefits. Pharmaceutical companies use it to create a positive 'buzz' around their products.

PR Week magazine describes a campaign by the Ogilvy firm to help its client, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, hype an allergy medication called Zyrtec. Ogilvy cultivated a partnership with a third party, the

National Allergy Bureau (NAB is supported by a grant from Pfizer) to add credibility to its aggressive spring allergy campaign. The NAB distributed a press announcement on the impact El Niño would have. Video and radio news releases and a community news feature all highlighted the El Niño-allergy connection. The NAB hotline (800-9-POLLEN) in the messages helped drive consumers to their phones, where they received branded-product information on request. Media contacts were encouraged to mention Zyrtec in allergy stories. The campaign enticed reporters to revisit the topic of allergies with a timely angle. Media coverage was estimated at almost 100 million 'audience impressions'. The El Niño theme produced numerous top-tier placements in *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Boston Globe*. The video-news release, done by Medialink, secured TV coverage that included a segment on network-wide *Dateline NBC*.



Sometimes companies underwrite entire scientific conferences to hype a product. In *Tainted Truth: The Manipulation of Fact in America*, Cynthia Crossen quotes a professor of medicine describing how this works: 'I'm the advertising guy for the drug. I tell a journal I will give them $100,000 to have a special issue on that drug. Plus I'll give the journal so much per reprint, and I'll order a lot of reprints. I'll select the editor and all the authors. I phone everyone who has written good things about that drug. I say: "I'll fly you and your wife first class to New Orleans for a symposium. I'll put your paper in the special issue of the journal, and you'll have an extra publication for your CV." Then I'll put a reprint of that symposium on some doctor's desk and say: "Look at this marvelous drug!"'

It's not our fault: corporate-spun scientists claim Hurricane Mitch has nothing to do with global warming.

NIGEL DICKINSON / STILL PICTURES

Disarming the critic

In the hotly contested terrain over regulatory and liability law a coalition of corporate attorneys, lobbyists, PR firms and right-wing think-tanks have launched a crusade against what they call 'junk science'. They apply this term liberally to any research – no matter how rigorous – justifying regulations to protect the environment and public health. 'This term "junk science" is being thrown around all the time,' says Lucinda Finley, a law professor who specializes in product liability and women's health. 'People are calling scientists who disagree with them purveyors of "junk". But what we're really talking about is a very normal process of scientific disagreement... Calling someone a junk scientist is just a way of shutting them up.'

'Calling someone a junk scientist is just a way of shutting them up'

Many of the organizations involved in this campaign have names that evoke images of sober scholarship and environmental concern. Others are familiar right-wing institutions that flowered during the Reagan years. They include the Advancement of Sound Science Coalition, the American Council on Science and Health, the American Land Rights Association, the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Consumer Alert, the Environmental Policy Analysis Network, Frontiers of Freedom, the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institute, the Hudson Institute, the National Center for Policy Analysis, the National Center for Public Policy Research.

Right-wing think-tanks multiply more rapidly than mating gerbils. 'We've got think-tanks the way other towns have fire stations,' observes *Washington Post* columnist Joel Achenbach. 'This is a thoughtful town.'

Among the organizations that flack for corporate science, the New York-based American Council on Science and Health (ACSH) is one of the oldest and best known. Founded in 1978, it calls itself 'a science-based, public-health group that is directed by a board of 300 leading physicians and scientists... providing mainstream, peer-reviewed scientific information to American consumers'. In fact, ACSH funders include many of the major players in the chemical, pesticide, pharmaceuticals and food industries: American Cyanamid, American Meat Institute, Amoco, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Burger King, Chevron, Coca-Cola, Dow Chemical, DuPont, Exxon, Ford, Mobil, Monsanto, National Agricultural Chemicals Association, Nestlé, Pepsi-Cola, Pfizer, Procter & Gamble, Shell, Union Carbide and Uniroyal Chemical.

Although the ACSH styles itself as a 'scientific' organization, it does very little independent primary research. Instead, it specializes in generating media advisories that criticize or praise scientists depending on their philosophical position. It has mastered the modern media sound-bite, issuing a regular stream of news releases with catchy, quotable phrases responding to hot-button environmental issues. Its recent media forays have helped generate headlines such as:

'A Global Scare: The Environmental Doomsday Machine is in High Gear'

'Irradiation: Only Sure Method to Protect US Food Supply'

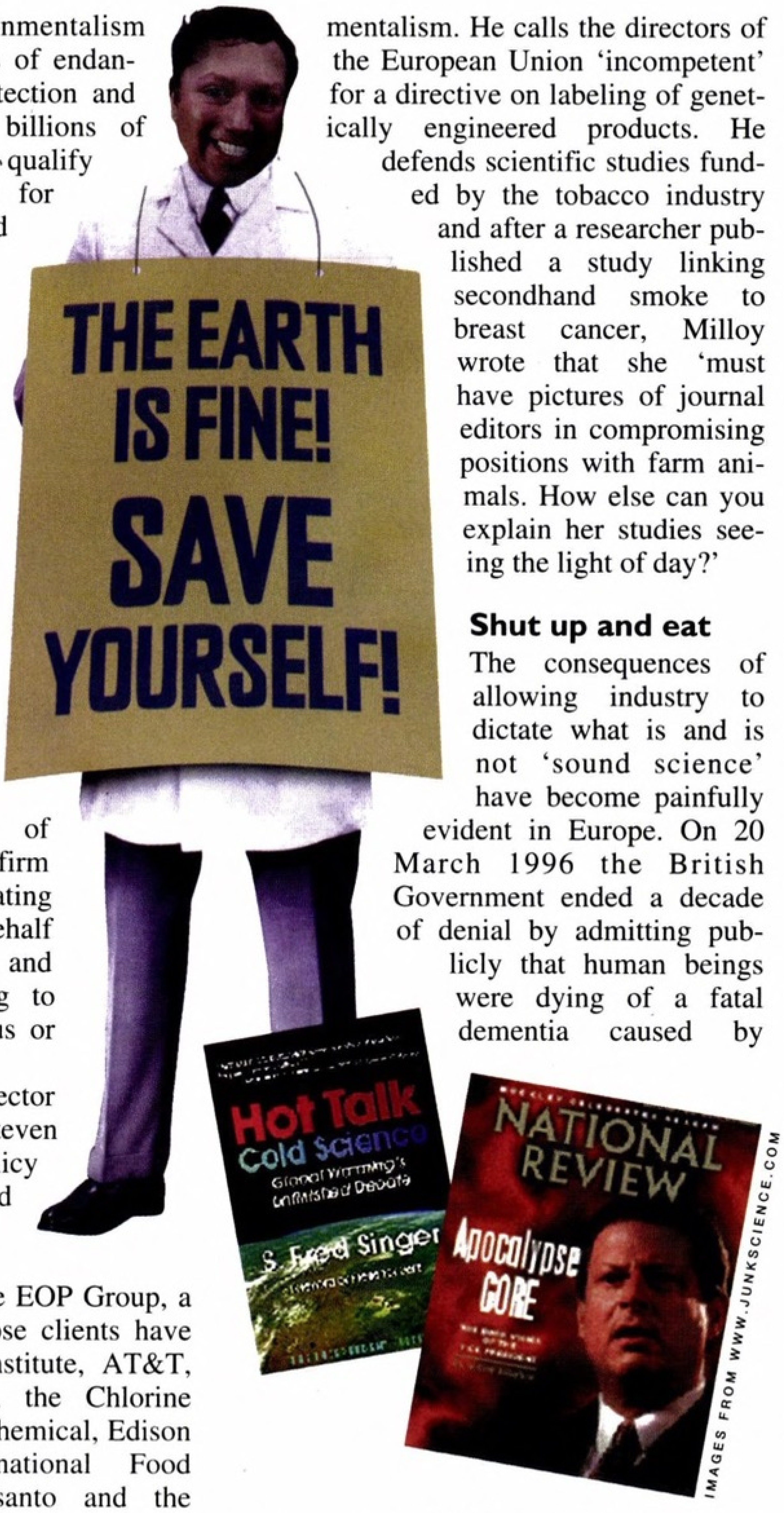
'Evidence Lacking that PCB Levels Harm Health'

'The Fuzzy Science Behind New Clean-Air Rules'

'Eat Beef, America'

'At Christmas Dinner, Let Us Be Thankful for Pesticides and Safe Food'

ACSH calls the ban on DDT 'one of the 20 worst unfounded health scares of the 20th century'. It ridicules the risks that chemical 'endocrine disruptors' pose to human health and fertility. Its board chair characterizes environmentalism as a belief that 'members of endangered species deserve protection and that, because there are billions of humans, humanity does not qualify for protection'. He calls for abolition of the Endangered Species Act.



IMAGES FROM WWW.JUNKSCIENCE.COM

The junkman

The groups which flack for 'sound science' are sometimes fly-by-night organizations – called into existence for a particular cause or legislative lobby campaign. They dry up and blow away once the campaign is over. The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC) lasted less than five years. Founded in 1993, TASSC was run out of the Washington office of APCO Associates, a PR firm that is notorious for creating front groups to lobby on behalf of tobacco, insurance, and chemical interests seeking to limit liability for dangerous or defective products.

TASSC's executive director from 1997 to 1998 was Steven Milloy, a Washington policy wonk who has rotated through a variety of anti-environmental organizations as well as the EOP Group, a prominent lobby firm whose clients have included the Petroleum Institute, AT&T, the Business Roundtable, the Chlorine Chemistry Council, Dow Chemical, Edison Electric Institute, International Food Additives Council, Monsanto and the Nuclear Energy Institute. On the internet, Milloy sponsors a 'Junk Science Home Page' (www.junkscience.com), a rabble-rousing melange of ad hominem attacks on 'wacko enviros' and 'mindless anti-chemical hysteria'. Calling himself 'The Junkman', he dismisses reports of a thinning ozone layer as 'nutty'. He has called for repeal of a program by the US Environmental Protection Agency to screen chemicals that may disrupt hormone systems. He opposes automobile emissions testing as 'just another clever ploy to separate you from your money'. He sells a poster headlined 'The Earth Is Fine, Save Yourself' which claims to debunk environmentalism. He calls the directors of the European Union 'incompetent' for a directive on labeling of genetically engineered products. He defends scientific studies funded by the tobacco industry and after a researcher published a study linking secondhand smoke to breast cancer, Milloy wrote that she 'must have pictures of journal editors in compromising positions with farm animals. How else can you explain her studies seeing the light of day?'

Right-wing think-tanks multiply more rapidly than mating gerbils

Shut up and eat

The consequences of allowing industry to dictate what is and is not 'sound science' have become painfully evident in Europe. On 20 March 1996 the British Government ended a decade of denial by admitting publicly that human beings were dying of a fatal dementia caused by exposure to cattle afflicted with 'mad-cow disease'. As of April 1999 the confirmed human death toll from a new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) stood at 40. Given the slow incubation period of the disease, experts fear the ultimate number will be much higher. These deaths might have been averted if British officialdom had not attacked early warnings as 'pure supposition, over-reaction and scare-mongering'.

Even as the death toll mounts, government and industry voices in the US repeat the Big Lie about the transmissibility of the disease to humans. On 11 May 1997 the *Wall Street Journal* ran an opinion column by Dr Scott C Ratzan, insisting that the mad-cow hubbub 'has all been much ado about nothing. Based on available scientific evidence, we can be virtually certain that mad-cow disease poses no threat to humans... What is clear is that people don't get it by eating meat from cows or lamb... Mad-cow disease kills only cattle.'

Ratzan, who teaches at a small liberal-arts college that specializes in subjects such as acting and public relations, has no background in research related to mad-cow disease or CJD. His editorial is ridiculous in the eyes of the researchers engaged in the study of these diseases. Nevertheless, his column was duly reproduced on Steve Milloy's junk-science home page. An accompanying commentary by the Junkman himself accused the British scientific journal *Nature* of a 'mad-cow witch hunt'.

ACSH also seems to regard Ratzan's opinions as authoritative. In November 1998 it offered an award for 'best high school essay' to a student who, relying on Ratzan as a source, argued that 'the media's fear of "mad-cow" disease has led to a frenzy... crippling the British beef market.'

Meanwhile, voices which dissent from these deceptions are being effectively silenced, thanks to laws passed in more than a dozen US states making it a criminal offense to 'unscientifically disparage food'. TV talk-show host Oprah Winfrey became the first target of these laws in 1998 when Texas cattlemen took her to court in a high-profile lawsuit that charged her with junking science by hosting a program that discussed the dangers of mad-cow disease. After spending more than $2 million in legal fees, Winfrey won the first round of her court battle, but appeals and other expensive legal maneuvers are ongoing. Other US journalists, chastened by the fear of such legal quagmires, are increasingly reluctant to report on other controversial food-safety and environmental issues.

In reality, the junk-science wars are more about propaganda and censorship than about science. Right-wing groups and their corporate sponsors have wrapped themselves in the flag of 'sound science' and are using their public-relations clout and litigation threats to bully the news media and dominate debates over critical issues. Until public-interest organizations and concerned scientists better understand this and fight back against these all-too-successful tactics, the battle over junk science will continue in the media as a very one-sided fight. ■

Sheldon Rampton and **John Stauber** run the US-based Center for Media and Democracy which publishes the excellent quarterly *PR Watch*. Subs are $35. Their address is 3318 Gregory Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53711 Website: www.prwatch.org. They have written two excellent books on the public relations industry: *Toxic Sludge is Good For You* ($16.95) and *Mad Cow U.S.A.* ($24.95) and are currently working on a new book on junk science.

Bandaid bandwagon

Sarah Blackstock believes the reputation of micro-credit has more to do with its corporate friendliness than its success in helping poor people.

WHEN the women in a small village in Tangail district hear I am researching micro-credit, they approach my translator and ask if we can arrange a secret meeting. They want to set the record straight. Away from their homes, husbands and the NGOs that disburse credit to them, the women feel safe to say the unmentionable in Bangladesh – micro-credit isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Micro-credit provides poor people with small loans – usually no more than $50 – to initiate self-run, income-generating projects. More than 30 million micro-loans are disbursed worldwide every year – and they are increasing at an annual rate of 30 to 40 per cent, according to the World Bank.

Micro-credit gained international fame as a result of the widely touted 'success' of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Since establishing the Bank in 1976, Professor Muhammad Yunus has tirelessly promoted micro-credit as the most crucial of poverty-alleviation tools, telling politicians, bankers and development practitioners that access to credit is a human right.

Certainly, micro-credit has been useful to many poor people. However, it may not be as successful as its proponents claim. In 1998 Harvard economist Jonathan Morduch studied three major micro-credit organizations in Bangladesh, including Grameen Bank. 'While strong claims are made for the ability of micro-finance to reduce poverty,' he says, 'only a handful of studies use sizable samples and appropriate frameworks to answer the question.' What has really sold micro-credit is Yunus's seductive oratorical skills, which have inspired hundreds of audiences. 'If we can come up with a system that allows everybody access to credit while ensuring excellent repayment, I can guarantee that poverty will not last long,' urged Yunus in a typical speech.

In 1997 the world's élite – including the Clintons, executives of major banks and multinationals – gathered in Washington at a Micro-Credit Summit. They pledged their support to provide 100 million of the world's poor families with small loans for self-employment projects by the year 2005. The Summit was organized by the American-based RESULTS Educational Fund which, alongside Grameen, is one of the leading micro-credit promoters, and is 'dedicated to mass educational strategies to generate the will to end world hunger'. Its sister organization, RESULTS (Responsibility Ending Starvation Using Legislation, Trim-tabbing and Support), is a grassroots lobby group, training and empowering 'everyday' people to lobby their politicians and local media in favour of the anti-poverty projects it supports – one of the main ones being micro-credit.

Working closely with Grameen Bank, RESULTS' propaganda strategy uses similar tactics to the micro-credit pioneer himself. Both ascribe poverty to a lack of inspiration and depoliticize it by refusing to look at its causes. Micro-credit propagators are always the first to advocate that poor people need to be able to help themselves. The kind of micro-credit they promote isn't really about gaining control, but ensuring the key beneficiaries of global capitalism aren't forced to take any responsibility for poverty.

While the corporate sponsors of micro-credit may bathe in the glow of selfless generosity, they are at least as motivated by the potential for profits. Soon after the Micro-Credit Summit, plans for a Grameen-Monsanto Centre for Environment-Friendly Technologies were announced. At the Centre, demonstration farms were to provide access for poor farmers to Monsanto's own high-tech products. When people around the world fiercely protested the Centre as a threat to biodiversity and indigenous farming practices Grameen pulled out of the deal to save its image. However, Monsanto has kept its place on RESULTS' Council of Corporations and the relationship between Grameen and Monsanto continues. Grameen Foundation USA, whose job is to promote the work of Grameen Bank in the Americas, shares board members with RESULTS and boasts members including Yvette Neier, a marketing expert – one of whose clients is Monsanto.

But as one micro-credit borrower told me in Bangladesh: 'We don't move up like the NGOs promise. Micro-credit keeps us going in circles. But no-one wants us to say that. All they care about is that we make our repayments and follow the rules.' ■

Sarah Blackstock is an activist and writer based in Toronto.

MONSANTO
OUT
OF
BANGLADESH
রিবেশ
ংসকারী
মনসান্টো
হটাও
SANFEC

Signs of dissent: Monsanto's alliance with the Grameen Bank gets people out on the street.

SARAH BLACKSTOCK

Lies and the laptop bombardiers

The barrage of words and images that accompanied the beginning of the crisis in Kosovo was an exercise in official cheer-leading by both sides. **Richard Swift** looks through the smoke and mirrors.

As the refugees poured out of Kosovo and the bombs fell nightly on Belgrade, everybody knew that lies were being told but nobody could say where the dividing line was between the truth and the lies. For the average Western TV viewer or newspaper reader it was a lot easier to pick out Slobodan Milosevic's lies than to detect the media management of NATO PR smoothie Jamie ('You know NATO, we always tell the truth') Shea. Equally, in Yugoslavia the heavy hand of Serb propaganda carried the distinctive odour of old-style totalitarianism, especially after its lively independent press had been silenced. In war, dissent becomes treason – as the murder of an independent Belgrade editor illustrated all too clearly.

Official Serbian disinformation, however, didn't play well in Manchester and Montreal. What ethnic cleansing? What murder? What rape? What paramilitaries? Albanian terrorists! The integrity of the fatherland/motherland! Spies and traitors! The holy struggle to defend the historic national birthright! It was pretty hard to believe the claim by the Serbian refugee commissioner Bratislavia Morina that there were only 'about 50,000 (Kosovar) refugees'. The tally at the Albanian and Macedonian borders was closer to a million. We could see them with our own eyes. Or the Tanjug news-agency report that NATO had lost 32 planes by early April. Where were the wrecks and corpses?

NATO's tactic was different. It admitted errors, regretted mistakes, apologized to the families of civilian bombing casualties. But each individual apology (always accompanied by assertions of 'just cause') avoided the bigger question of the advisability of the bombing policy in the first place. As the 'mistakes' – the column of Albanian refugees, the Chinese Embassy, the two civilian buses, the passenger train – mounted, the fiction of a 'controlled' war looked increasingly threadbare.

NATO's propaganda efforts revolved around trying to change our very perceptions of war. They used a specialized military language and technical euphemisms ('surgical strikes', 'mopping-up operations') to ease our fears. The media amplified the official line, giving the public reassurance through the illusion of 'special' knowledge. We 'shared' NATO's dispassionate understanding of the conflict, as everything unfolded as it should, or at least must.

But did it? The fact was that innocent people were being killed every night. World tensions were being perilously racheted up. Ethno-Stalinists in Belgrade had a free hand to brutalize Kosovar Albanians. A huge, Palestinian-style refugee problem was being created in the centre of Europe. The cost of the war would put pressure on social and aid spending for a generation. 'Don't panic!' the authorities loved to say. Yet there may well have been good reason to panic – or at least dissent.

The NATO daily briefing on war events drew much from the example of media management during the Gulf War. Journalists become part of the war effort, flying in planes, visiting command bunkers, attending special briefings, sleepwalking through the war. In the Balkans they showed little knowledge of culture or history. Instead they concentrated on tactical debate – when and how ground troops should go in, which weapons systems should be used. They avoided fundamentals. Were TV stations, power grids and water supplies really 'military' targets? Had the bombing worsened the plight of the Kosovars? How effective was air-strike diplomacy in gaining democracy and human rights? What was the morality of the collective punishment of a people because of their dubious leadership?

Of course there were a few noble exceptions – veteran British journalists Robert Fisk and John Simpson, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Pacifica radio stations in the US. Fortunately, few journalists joined the 'laptop bombardiers' in the jingoistic tabloid press or columnists like the *New York Times'* Thomas Friedman ('give war a chance'). Most simply let the official frame of the war contain their reporting. No wonder US Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke, in a speech to the prestigious Overseas Press Club, congratulated US media luminaries for their 'extraordinary and exemplary' coverage.

But the meat and potatoes of this kind of coverage was the pedagogy of war. A procession of uniforms mounted the NATO podium while aerial footage of what the pilot saw through his bomb site the previous night filled the big screen. The issues that count were those of military technology and tactics. How were the Stealth bombers or Apache helicopter-gunships to be utilized? The aerodynamics (but not the cost) of a Cruise missile. How a pilot approaches the target. How weather conditions affect target selection and weaponry. The big TV networks gave us teenage video-game renderings of how the Apaches would swoop down over Kosovo's hills to incinerate army tanks. It was so antiseptic one could barely believe that young Serb conscripts were also being incinerated in the twisted metal. Our 'advanced' technology was simply teaching their 'primitive' technology who was boss.

A Canadian pilot involved in the raids told a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation interviewer that he just didn't have time to think about the effects of the bombs he dropped on the people below. Yet it was not immediately apparent why this long-distance killing was so superior to the act of putting a gun to the neck of a young Kosovar who might otherwise have ended up as a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) militant.

The effect of all this techno-war propaganda on our own culture is hard to measure. Certainly it can't be good. The connection may be speculative, but dramatic examples of social violence followed immediately after the start of the war: high-school students were massacred in Colorado and Alberta, nail bombs explode without warning on the streets of London, and BBC TV presenter Jill Dando was assassinated. University of California sociologist David Phillips did a study back in the 1980s of the effects of televising championship boxing matches on network TV. He was able to establish that there were an extra 11 murders in the US during the four days following each fight. How much greater the 'permission-giving' effect of a daily diet of war violence?

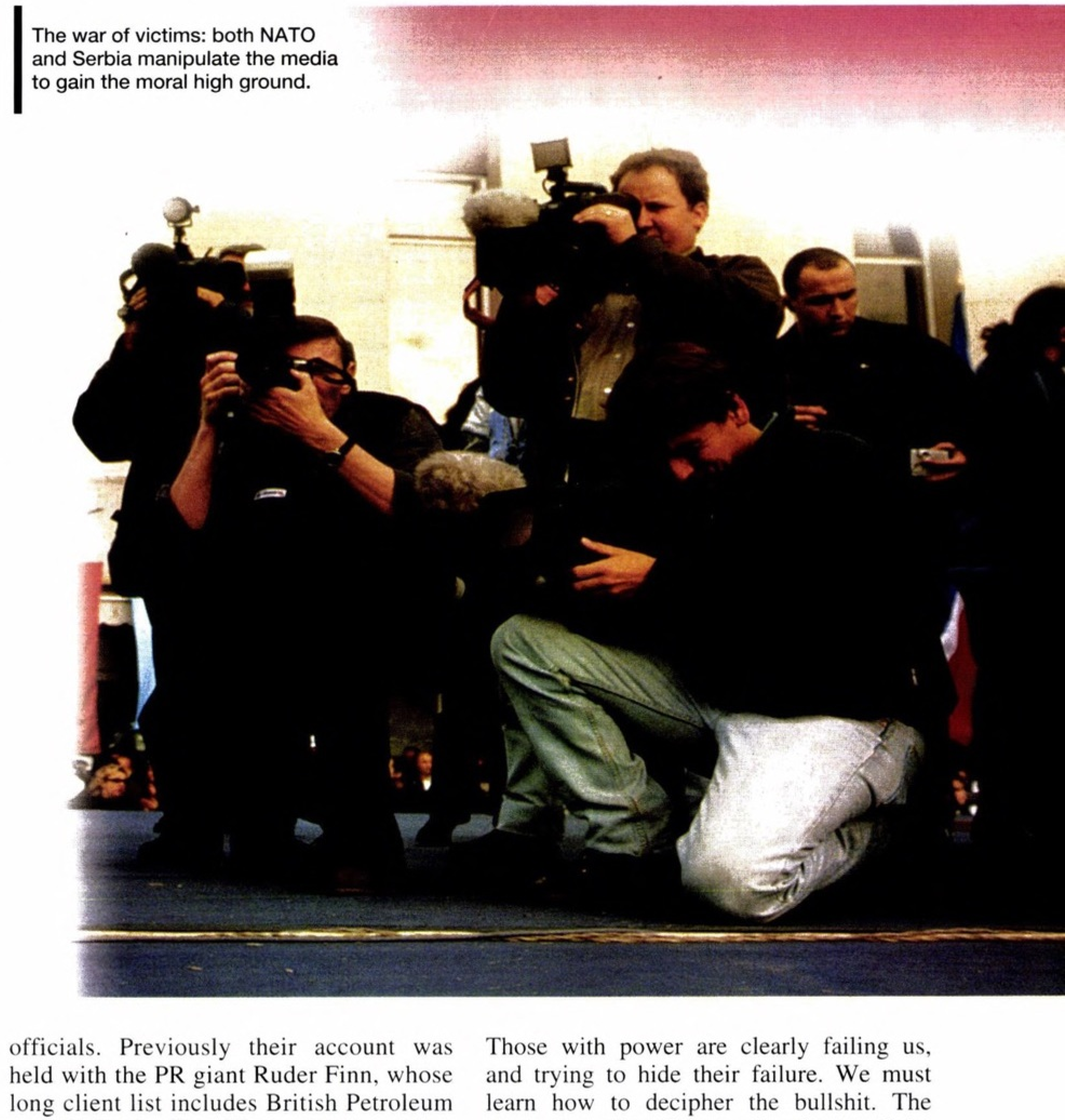
As the war continued, whatever humanitarian impulses underlay NATO's original motivation were pushed into the background. And the propaganda war reflected that trend. The credibility of NATO and US global leadership were on the line. The Kosovar refugees become more a symbol for continuing the war than real people. Actual attempts to aid Kosovars still in the country through air drops of food were dismissed by US General Wesley Clark as 'too dangerous a risk for low-flying pilots and planes'. NATO's low-risk, high-tech machine couldn't deal with the door-to-door, village-by-village reality of ethnic cleansing. The US commitment of a mere $55 million to help a million-odd refugees represented the cost of just a couple of days' bombing.

The momentum of war distorts priorities. Obsession with victory is divorced from the mounting human cost. In such a situation it is standard practice to divert people's attention from *why* to *how* a war is being fought. Propaganda replaces argument. Spin and media management are the order of the day. No-one must stray from the official script. Serbs show damage from the bombing; NATO responds with shots from refugee camps. Each strives for the moral high ground.

Others, like the KLA (with its own human-rights credibility problem), hire Washington PR firms to give them the proper spin. Their account is held by the Washington International Group, which is headed by former State Department officials. Previously their account was held with the PR giant Ruder Finn, whose long client list includes British Petroleum and Citibank. The KLA needed spin to take full advantage of being elevated from 'terrorists' to the West's favourite 'freedom fighters' almost overnight. The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has the American International Development Group doing their lobbying. Montenegro had a contract with Preston Gates Ellis to help it carve out an identity separate from Serbia. The bombs fall and the professional PR spins simultaneously.

Meanwhile a coalition of 18 Serb civil-society and human-rights groups tried to carve out some independent space with a brave statement that called for an end not only to ethnic cleansing and bombing but to the lying as well: 'We demand the Serb and international media... refrain from participation in the media war and from fanning inter-ethnic hatred, hysteria and glorification of force as the only reasonable way out of the crisis.'

When propaganda rules it is difficult to clear the air of stereotypes and search for humane solutions – to maintain a moral compass. Yet that is what we need to do. Those with power are clearly failing us, and trying to hide their failure. We must learn how to decipher the bullshit. The Australian Alex Carey, who pioneered the study of corporate PR, always claimed that the spin-meisters strive for a public reaction that is at once 'intense and shallow'. This is doubly true in times of war and national emergency. The main enemy of the propaganda machine will always be those who reject emotive invitations and continue to think for themselves. ■

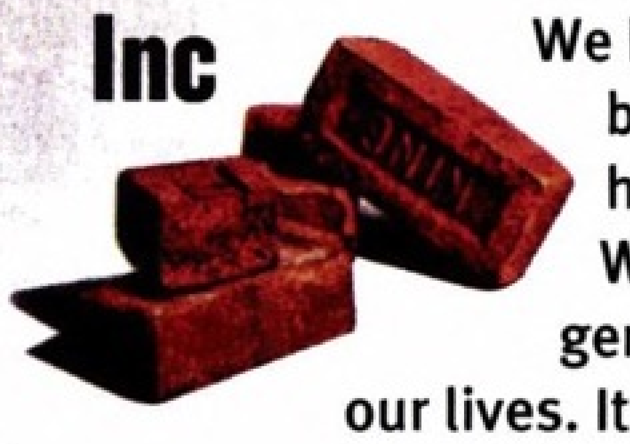


The war of victims: both NATO and Serbia manipulate the media to gain the moral high ground.

CHIP HIRES / FRANK SPOONER

The public-relations specialist lives in a world of convenient half-truths that are useful to whatever well-heeled client is paying the bills. But, if you look long enough, a rather disturbing pattern – in fact a world-view – emerges out of all this expensive spin. It is often clothed in the rhetoric of humane concern and environmental responsibility. But profitability and unimpeded market outcomes are its ultimate measuring stick. Sometimes you hear it, sometimes you don't. But always the volume of the corporate-speak machine is cranked up high enough to drown out resistance and any talk of alternatives. This is what it sounds like.

Utopia Inc



We have worked wonders.'Progress' has delivered untold bounty and marvelous scientific discovery, bringing humankind from cave-dwelling to technological Nirvana. We are reaching out into the universe, rearranging our genes and developing new medical technologies to extend our lives. It is only the faint-hearted and nay-sayers who can't fall in line with our march into the future. Tragically these malcontents have caused corporate initiative to be hedged in by stultifying regulation. It is only the corporate risk-takers producing a new generation of eco-friendly agro-chemicals or fuel-efficient cars that can save the day. The 'fundamentals' of techno-growth must never be questioned or we'll be back rubbing sticks together to make fire.

The nosy media

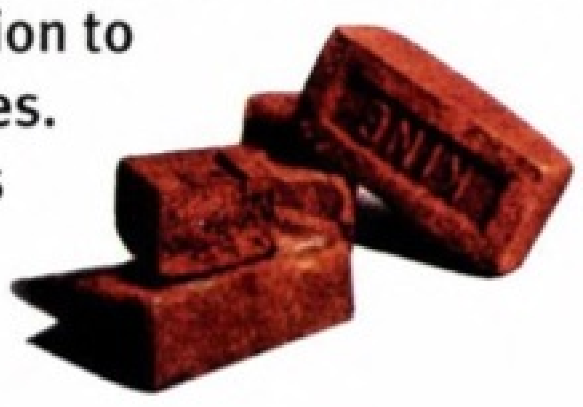
Our growing army of PR professionals now outnumbers the harried band of journalists – and a damn good thing too! For far too long, muckraking leftist and liberal journalists have been out to 'get' corporations. To put an end to this once and for all, appropriate pressures can be applied: journalists can be courted, special briefings arranged, pre-packaged news provided, editors pressured by advertisers to discourage unfavourable coverage, libel-chill spread by the strategic use of law suits. Keep the journos busy and they won't have time for all that expensive investigative stuff. Better to spin angles from the viewpoint of the CEO – the burden of dealing with government regulation, labour, foreign competition, special-interest groups and so on. Other helpful stories may introduce a new product, or profile the company and its plucky leadership. After all, media are good business.

Eco-alarmists

The exaggerated fears of irrational ecologists have cost us all billions of dollars. Some – like global warming and ozone depletion – are just not true. Others – such as the dangers involved with exposure to dioxin or asbestos – are exaggerated. Sure there are risks. Life itself is risky. The tobacco industry and its decades-long defense of smoking provides the template for fighting back. So we must insist that the onus of proof lies with the would-be regulator or carping critic. And why not out-green the greens? Even the oil or pulp and paper industries can paint themselves in the brightest of green hues as ever-vigilant guardians of nature. Earth Day itself, thanks to a bit of largesse from us, has become a celebration of Eco-Responsibility Inc. After all, the environment is everybody's business, so make sure you are ecologically pure in all your personal habits before you go pointing fingers at nuclear power stations or super-tankers.

Troublemakers

Those opposing corporate policies on labour-shedding or product safety are mostly self-seeking malcontents. Women's organizations, trade unions, consumer groups, human-rights advocates or environmentalists are just 'special interests' involved in partisan pleading. Opponents of corporate activity are either ill-informed (and must be educated), opportunists (and can be bought off and manipulated) or ideologically-inspired radicals (and must be isolated and vilified). The purposes of dialogue with opponents is to buy them off, tie them up in endless consultation, divert their attention to other issues or divide them against themselves. Sometimes it may be useful to change what is inconsequential or purely symbolic.



The price of progress

Resistance to almost any type of corporate or state activity is an immature failure to draw the connections between our 'way of life' and what is needed to ensure it. This is a very helpful PR strategy in times of undeniable crisis, when an exposé of child-labour conditions has to be explained, a military intervention justified or a damaging report on pesticide poisoning neutralized. If all other forms of obfuscation fail, a good finger-wagging about the 'choices' we all have to make – in favour of car-mad culture, brand-name clothes, cheap food or a stable world order – serve to pull people up short. If we are going to keep the goodies, we shouldn't be shocked over a little spillage of oil here or a bit of exploitation there. Wake up and smell the coffee!

TINA

A useful old chestnut is TINA: 'There is no alternative.' It's a tough job, but somebody has to do it. Let them go on about soft energy, organic agriculture, mass transit, preventive healthcare, consuming less and living more, democracy at work and in the community, fairer taxes, preserving wild places and endangered species, a guaranteed annual income and sustainable development. That's all beside the point when you've got to meet a pay roll and keep your stock price buoyant at the same time. These long-term thinkers are all very well, but let's get practical. TINA helps to discourage critics and leads to a mood of shoulder-shrugging compliance amongst the general populace.

Mea Culpa

The last resort is to admit guilt. Sure, once upon a time we used to foul rivers, hire child labour in Bangladesh, introduce inadequately tested miracle drugs, use tons of wasteful packaging for our fast-food franchises. But those bad old days are gone. We have seen the light! We are now an environmentally friendly, happy-face company that puts nature and people first. We are generous with the Opera and even give donations to a few responsible environmental organizations. We support a voluntary code of corporate conduct in our industry. We only hope that you feel as good about us as we feel about ourselves!

PHOTOMONTAGE: RICHARD SLYE

Happy-face

Joel Bleifuss probes the 'Third Way' approach to politics pioneered by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton.

The art of politics has come a long way since the 1960 US Presidential election when Richard Nixon and John Kennedy met in the first televised debate. Kennedy handily won the exchange, his powdered face more than a match for Nixon's sweaty, in-need-of-a-shave visage. Electoral politics would never be the same again. With the US leading the way and the rest of the world quick to follow, image manipulation replaced policy formation as the key ingredient of political success.

In 1992, the 46-year-old candidate Bill Clinton dyed his hair gray in order to appear more statesman-like. In 1997 in Britain, Tony Blair exploited his youth to lead 'New Labour' to victory over the ossified Tories. Last year in Germany, Gerhard Schroder, the 1960s radical retooled as a 1990s pragmatist, beat out the veteran Helmut Kohl.

Appearances, of course, aren't everything. In today's political world, elected officials also rely on opinion management to craft their agendas and mold an electoral majority. In effect, successful politicians have stopped being leaders and become followers, adherents to the spinmeisters, polls, political consultants, focus groups, television ads, psychographics and make-up artists that shape the candidate and the message. These gambits succeed best when the politicians eschew ideology and position themselves in a nebulous center. Such electoral engineering may not produce leaders who challenge conventional wisdom. But it does win elections.

President Bill Clinton was re-elected in 1996 after reminding the voters that, among other things, he 'ended welfare as we know it'. That August he had cravenly signed the Republican Congress' welfare reform bill. The American public wanted something done about welfare, and Clinton did what was politically expedient. Most of his advisors opposed his action. In an internal White House debate Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros put it this way: 'The objective reality is that people are going to get hurt.' But in politics objective reality takes a back seat to perceived reality.

In signing the bill, Clinton was following the advice of the master image manipulator and political consultant Dick Morris. Morris counseled him in 1996 to aim for the center and adopt conservative policies, taking the initiative from the Republicans and isolating liberal Democrats. In *The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the 21st Century*, Morris writes: 'To win and to govern successfully, a candidate of either party must take care not to be captured, branded and held hostage by the extremists and ideologues in his own party. He must transcend party and appeal to the middle.'

Morris's own 'New Prince' has taken this lesson to heart. Soon after his re-election, speaking to a gathering of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) – an organization of conservative 'New Democrats' – Clinton explained that what the country needed was 'a vital American center where there is co-operation across the lines of party and philosophy'. Last June, again speaking to the DLC, Clinton explained: 'We have called our approach "the Third Way"– with a government that is more active, more effective, less expensive; one that can bring us together and move us forward, not drive us apart and set us back.'

Clinton's words are echoed in Britain by the 'New Labour' Prime Minister Tony Blair. In September 1998, Blair heralded the Third Way as 'the route to renewal and success for modern social democracy' that is 'free from outdated ideology'. 'There's change in our economic and social reality,' he said. 'It would be strange if it didn't make a difference in the way we look at our political realities.' But as media critic Morris Wolfe has observed: 'It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality.'

Before the Information Age, before spinning, there was shilling. In gambling lingo, a shill infects others with his betting fever, priming them to be fleeced by the house. In the days of medicine shows, a shill helped establish the credibility of the huckster who promoted dubious products or services. As times changed so did the shills. Thirty years ago, PR men were employed in the business world to present the company's viewpoint on a particular issue. Since then practitioners of the shilling arts have expanded their client base to include politicians, political parties and governments. To further their clients' political fortunes, 'communications professionals' employ lobbyists, fund their own media, develop ad campaigns and create instant grass-root constituencies.

Electoral engineering may not produce leaders who challenge conventional wisdom. But it does win elections

One of the most successful examples of

MARTIN ARGLES / CAMERA PRESS

this manipulation of public perception took place during the Gulf War. In the fall of 1990 stories were published everywhere detailing the barbarism of the Iraqi invaders, specifically how Iraqi soldiers had looted hospitals, stealing incubators and leaving their infant occupants to die. These allegations were detailed in a first-hand report by a young Kuwaiti woman, Nayirah, to a hearing of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. Only later was it revealed that the eyewitness was Nayirah al-Sabah, the 15-year-old daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador, and that the story was concocted by Hill and Knowlton, the Washington PR firm to which the al-Sabahs, Kuwait's royal family, paid $10 million to build public support for US intervention in the Gulf.

In building public support for candidates in electoral campaigns, image engineers perform a similar sleight of hand. According to Dick Morris, ten or so consultants from each political party run most of the major campaigns. These consultants 'focus entirely on tactics, ads and strategies and learn little about the substance of public policy'. Until recently, political consultants advised politicians on how to garner support from particular constituencies. Nowadays, the consultant recreates the politician to match the constituents' desires – as indicated by focus-group data and scientific opinion polls – and then markets the finished candidate back to that constituency. Without experts adept in scientific polling and analyzing demographic data today's politician would have hardly any idea what to say.

In Alexandria, Virginia, the marketing firm Claritas Inc has divided the 260 million US residents into 62 'clusters' and then mapped out where these clusters live, postal code by postal code. In the élite suburbs, Claritas has discerned the 'winner's circle', a group of people with a median household income of $80,630 who 'use a maid' and 'eat brie cheese'. They have also mapped out the haunts of urban-dwelling 'young literati' who, with a median household income of $52,145, 'buy expensive pens' and 'read fashion magazines'. The 'family scramble' subset, on the other hand, get by on a median household income of $19,441 and 'smoke regular cigarettes' and 'buy children's frozen dinners'.

These colorful maps make entertaining coffee-table reading, courtesy of Harper Perennial. But political consulting firms and well-heeled conservative groups are compiling similar maps charting precinct-by-precinct voting patterns and hot-button issues. *The Chicago Tribune* explained their rationale this way: 'Fewer products today are aimed at everyone. Instead, the goal often is to fit a product, whether it be a dog food, a wristwatch or a political candidate, into a market niche.'

Dick Morris in *The New Prince* underlines the importance of a focused message the politician can use to 'translate the public's grief into the system's issues'. The next step is 'media play' for the message. 'It is the one-paragraph sound-bite on which the story lives or dies.' Visuals are also key. 'In handling television, bear in mind that the medium cannot help itself. It needs pretty pictures,' he writes. 'Backdrops matter. The candidate should stand in front of an assemblage of American flags or a bevy of uniformed police with medals.' Sex can't hurt either. In the fall of 1990, as George Bush exhorted a rally in Minnesota to support the looming Gulf War, a row of cheerleaders kicked their legs in the background.

Should anything go wrong, the candidate's handlers are there with the right 'spin'. The exact derivation of this word is a little obscure. One spins a yarn, making up a story that deviates from the truth. In the world of politics, spin-meisters use spin to cast their client in the best possible light and their opponent in the worst. Spinning is well suited for the New Information Age with its reliance on electronic media.

During the age of print it was the journalists' job to interpret the utterances of civic leaders. But television relies on effervescent bites of sound that allow public figures to tell the TV audience whatever they want. No journalist stands between the politician and their audience. Ron Arnold, the far-right propagandist and founder of the Wise Use Movement who describes himself as the 'Darth Vader for the Capitalist revolution', put it bluntly: 'Facts don't matter; in politics, perception is reality.'

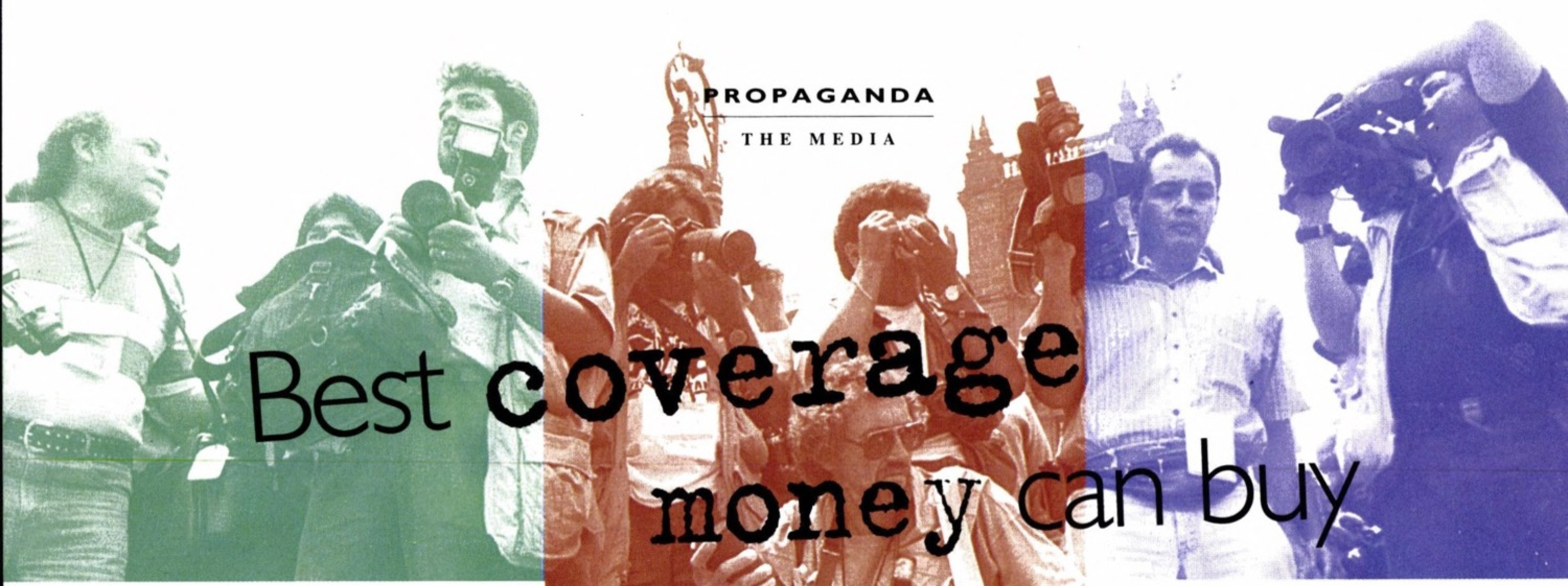
Governments employ legions of specialists to shape public perceptions. In Britain more than 1,000 civil servants work in the Government Information and Communication Service. Tony Blair's Government in its first year replaced 25 of the 44 heads or deputy-heads of information. The ousted head at social security, Steve Reardon, charged the Government with repeatedly trying to politicize departmental press releases. In addition the Blair Government established a 'strategic communications unit' to respond to events rapidly and with one voice.

'It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality'

C Wright Mills, in his 1951 classic *White Collar: The American Middle Class,* wrote: 'Under the system of explicit authority, in the round, solid nineteenth century, the victims knew they were being victimized; the misery and the discontent of the powerless were explicit. In the amorphous twentieth-century world, where manipulation replaces authority, the victim does not recognize his status.' The dangers to democracy posed by the shills, flacks and spin-meisters who engineer consent are difficult for citizens to comprehend. It's hard to fight what you don't see. But what you don't see can hurt you.

The shills of today concede nothing. They micro-manage human perceptions on a macro-scale. They obfuscate the past. And they appropriate the future, skillfully shaping people's expectations, desires and dreams with the best communication science money can buy. Orwell wrote in *1984:* 'Those who control the present control the past.' Today, those who control the present also control the future. Unless we recognize this threat and fight for spaces in our public and private spheres that are free from the influence peddlers, all signs point to an ugly future on which the spin doctors have put a happy face. ■

Joel Bleifuss is managing editor of the Chicago-based bi-weekly *In These Times*.



JOHN MITCHELL / PANOS PICTURES

Best coverage money can buy

Sharon Beder reveals how the well-oiled PR machine manufactures much of what we have come to think of as news.

PRESS releases were invented by public-relations expert Ivy Lee in the early years of the twentieth century in an effort to control media coverage of railway accidents for his client, Pennsylvania Railway. He decided that if the press was going to report the accidents it would be better to make sure they reported them from the company point of view. The strategy was so successful that by the late 1940s almost half the news was based on press releases from public-relations departments and firms.

Today there is a vast industry of public-relations specialists who feed stories to journalists and set up 'pseudo events' such as press conferences and tours, photo opportunities and pre-arranged interviews, all staged to provide reportable events for the media. This 'source journalism' has largely replaced investigative reporting for harried journalists looking for easy stories.

By initiating the story, PR people are better able to shape the angle it gets told from and determine which people get interviewed. The ultimate pre-packaged news is the video news release. This is sent to TV stations and often aired with little change or indication to the audience that what they are watching is not independent reporting. Most broadcasters, whether in Europe or the US, make use of these releases in putting together the news.

PR strategists also take advantage of the journalistic ideal of 'balance'. Take the case of global warming. Despite the overwhelming scientific consensus supporting the existence of global warming, the media often portray it as a controversial scientific debate. The handful of corporate-funded scientists who oppose this consensus is, in the interests of 'balance', so widely quoted in the media that a distorted picture of scientific confusion is being propagated.

According to Phil Lesly, author of a PR handbook: 'People generally do not favor action on a non-alarming situation when arguments seem to be balanced on both sides and there is a clear doubt. Media organizations are owned by multinational, multi-billion-dollar corporations that are involved in a wide range of businesses. These owners influence the selection, shaping and framing of the news not only to protect their own diverse interests but to attract advertisers. For commercial television and radio stations ads are their life-blood. They do their best to create a media product that suits those advertisers and captures audiences.'

Television soaps have their origins in advertisements by Procter & Gamble for their soap products. In the 1920s Procter & Gamble boosted soap sales by over 25 per cent with a series of newspaper advertisements which featured a family that used Ivory soap and a villain that used coloured and scented soaps. Following this success, Procter & Gamble tried radio shows which also featured stories that aimed to sell soap. These stories became known as 'soap operas' or 'washboard weepers'. Today's soaps and television entertainment portray a high-consumption US lifestyle and are shipped out to over 100 countries, making up the bulk of what most local audiences watch.

> ***This 'source journalism' has largely replaced investigative reporting***

Dioxin, once seen as one of the most toxic substances known to humanity, underwent a major PR facelift in the early 1990s with the help of the print media. The *New York Times* was one of the leading papers to downplay its dangers. One article, headlined 'US Officials Say Dangers of Dioxin Were Exaggerated', stated: 'Exposure to the chemical, once thought to be much more hazardous than chain-smoking, is now considered by some experts to be no more risky than spending a week sunbathing.' Another called for relaxation of 'the current strict and costly standards'. No mention was made of the fact that the *New York Times* had major interests in four paper mills. At the time, one of these mills was the subject of a Canadian law suit claiming $900 million for polluting three rivers with dioxin.

The *Times* articles were reprinted in more than 20 other major US newspapers and the claims that dioxin was no longer dangerous were repeated by dozens of other media outlets. The comparison with sunbathing – which *Times* reporter Keith Schneider admitted he thought up himself – was repeated in many media outlets and variously attributed to 'top federal scientists'. New scientific studies indicating that the danger of dioxin was in fact worse than previously realized were hardly reported. Media coverage continued to suggest that the dangers of dioxin had all been exaggerated by emotional environmentalists.

Environmental reporting emphasizes individual action rather than underlying social forces and issues. A current-affairs TV show may expose Corporation X for spewing toxic waste into the local waterway, but it will seldom look at the way corporations have lobbied to weaken the legislation preventing such dumping; how under-funded regulators allow corporations to monitor their own discharges; or the lack of personal liability for corporate board members who would put profit first and damn the consequences.

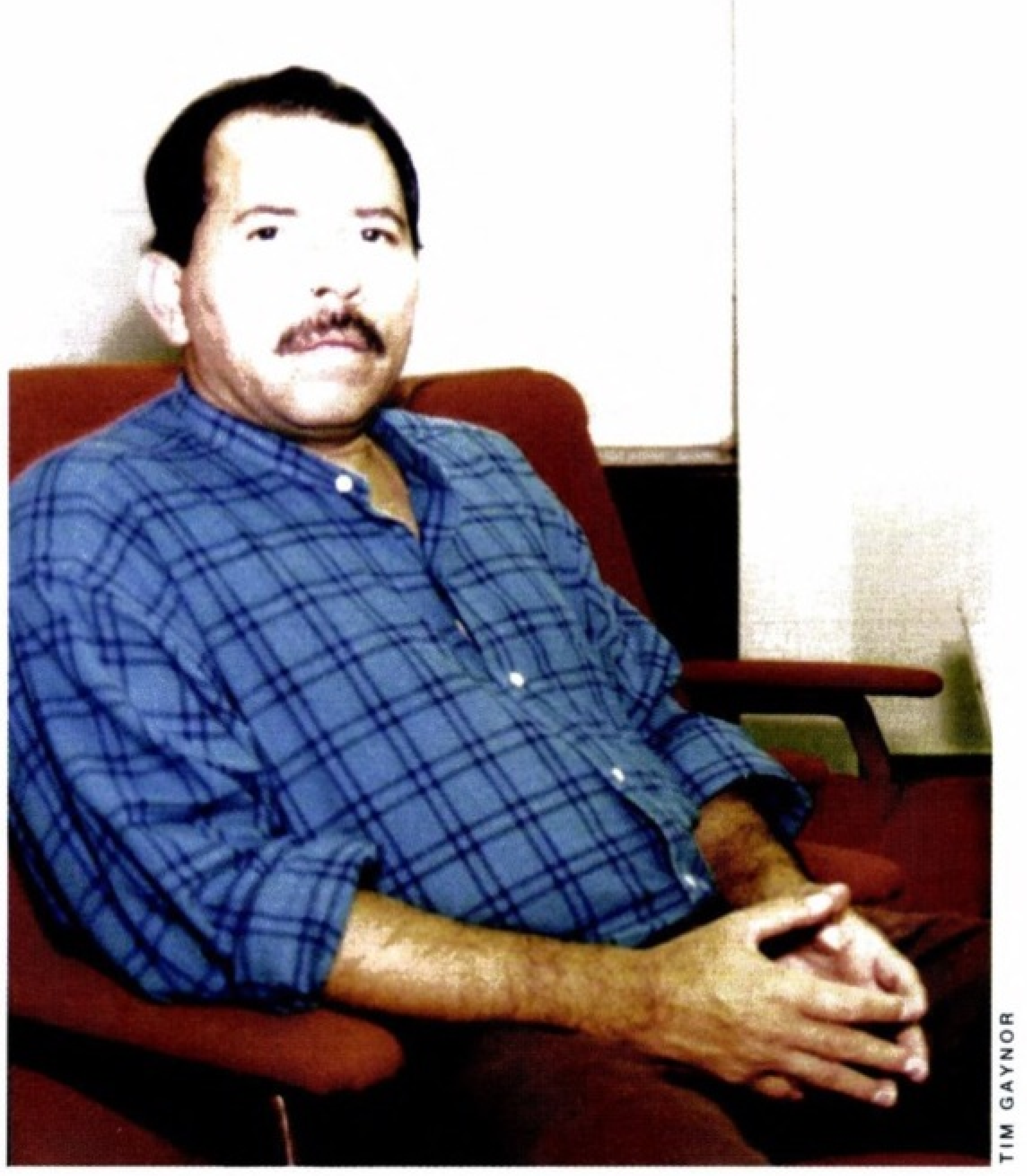
Journalists who try to expose these deeper societal maladies soon learn that it is the editor who decides which stories get aired or printed and how these are to be cut. Editors represent the owners in the news room. Journalists quickly learn which stories are likely to be run and internalize this message as a form of self-censorship – a helpful lesson in climbing the career ladder. ■

Sharon Beder is author of *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism* (Green Books, UK; Chelsea Green, US, 1997). She teaches at the University of Wollongong, Sydney, Australia.

The **NI** Interview

Daniel Ortega

Tim Gaynor in Nicaragua talks with one of the key architects of the Sandinista revolution.


TIM GAYNOR

It is now two decades since the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) marched triumphantly into the Nicaraguan capital of Managua. But Daniel Ortega, one of the key strategists of that revolution, has not lost his enthusiasm for the Sandinista vision of a more just society.

Twenty years ago a hard-fought guerrilla war forced the US-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza into exile and a new mood of hope and possibility buoyed the country's poor majority. Sadly, the intervening years have not been kind to Nicaragua or to the Sandinista's egalitarian dream. The desperately-poor Central American country has endured a deadly civil war, a brutal US-led economic blockade and defeat for the FSLN in two presidential elections. These traumas have inevitably tarnished the triumphs of the 1979 uprising.

Nonetheless, from his shady office in Managua, Ortega continues to stress the achievements of the Sandinista victory. 'The revolution broke the Somoza family's hold on military and economic power,' he explains. (The corrupt Somoza family had ruled the country from 1933 until the FSLN victory in July, 1979.) But more importantly: 'It gave back to Nicaraguans their human dignity. People gained the right to free thought and free expression in every respect. This was accompanied by education, health and social programmes that benefited everyone.'

Ortega's speech is marked by the rhythmic cadences of a natural orator and I am struck by the distinctive patterns of his Nicaraguan Spanish. He pauses a moment before summing up: 'At the end of the day what underpinned the Somoza regime was capitalism. Since our 11-year government ended in 1990 there has been a resurgence of the past model of domination. Neo-liberal policies have been used like the thin edge of a wedge to overthrow all the social gains that we put in place.'

The historical trajectory which saw socialism eclipsed by the return of the free market was also felt within the FSLN. Party stalwarts who once fought for collective ownership are now themselves owners of some of Nicaragua's largest banks and businesses. While they once evicted rich landowners from their plantations they now own estates producing sugar, coffee and bananas for export. The wheel seems to have come full circle.

Still a youthful 53, Ortega is a charismatic figure for many Nicaraguans. In a culture which tends to venerate its *caudillos* (strongmen), the *comandante* occupies a place in the national mythology alongside the FSLN's namesake – the Nicaraguan patriot Augusto Sandino. Ortega's image pops up everywhere: in newspapers, television news bulletins and on colourful wall murals. And he is still capable of mobilizing large sectors of the Nicaraguan population. (When I tell a Nicaraguan friend that I have just spoken with and photographed Daniel Ortega, she asks somewhat wide-eyed if I will give her one of the pictures.)

> ***'Neo-liberal policies have been used like the thin edge of a wedge to overthrow all the social gains that we put in place'***

But Daniel Ortega's leadership has suffered serious setbacks, too. Accusations of rape and sexual abuse made last year by his stepdaughter, Zoilamérica Narvaez, broke the leader's spell on his international admirers. For several months he withdrew from public life and refused to give interviews. More than a year later Ortega has returned to the political fray, but the charges remain a sensitive area. While he is happy to discuss the FSLN revolution and the broad strokes of contemporary policy, the issue of Zoilamérica is strictly off-limits.

Nor was he keen when I attempted a frank discussion of his leadership style. In spite of his claim that FSLN meetings resemble 'those of an anarchist party' there is widespread discontent in party circles over his tendency to stifle debate. Before the interview I spoke to a leading Sandinista dissident who complained she had been sidelined in the FSLN for questioning Ortega's leadership.

For his part Ortega refuses to speculate on a possible successor, preferring to focus on more pressing concerns like 'taking power in the elections in 2001'.

One of the main planks of the party's policy remains democratization, particularly of property, which Ortega says is: 'Fundamental for stability and development in Nicaragua. When we were in power we put land in the hands of 120,000 *campesinos* – as well as creating workers' co-operatives. People like these *need* to receive state support so that they can be productive. I am not talking about absolute control but rather a strategic intervention to influence the direction the economy takes – to counter the tendency of the market to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few.'

Finally, I ask his opinion on the class make-up of the present-day FSLN. Is it still a party of workers, peasants and intellectuals?

'The majority is still made up of workers and the unemployed,' he claims. 'But we do have a minority who represent the business community – and that includes small, medium and large-scale enterprises.' Ortega admits this generates a series of contradictions at the heart of the FSLN but that 'market contradictions' in Nicaraguan society are inevitably reflected in the organization.

'If we were an order of monks rather than a political party it might be possible to avoid such realities,' he quips. 'But we are not. How can we win an election if we turn our backs on the market? China, Vietnam and Cuba have all had to incorporate elements of the market economy without giving up their alternative socialist project.' ■

Tim Gaynor is a freelance writer based in Central America.

Last month's interview by Ruth Abrahamson was inaccurately attributed.

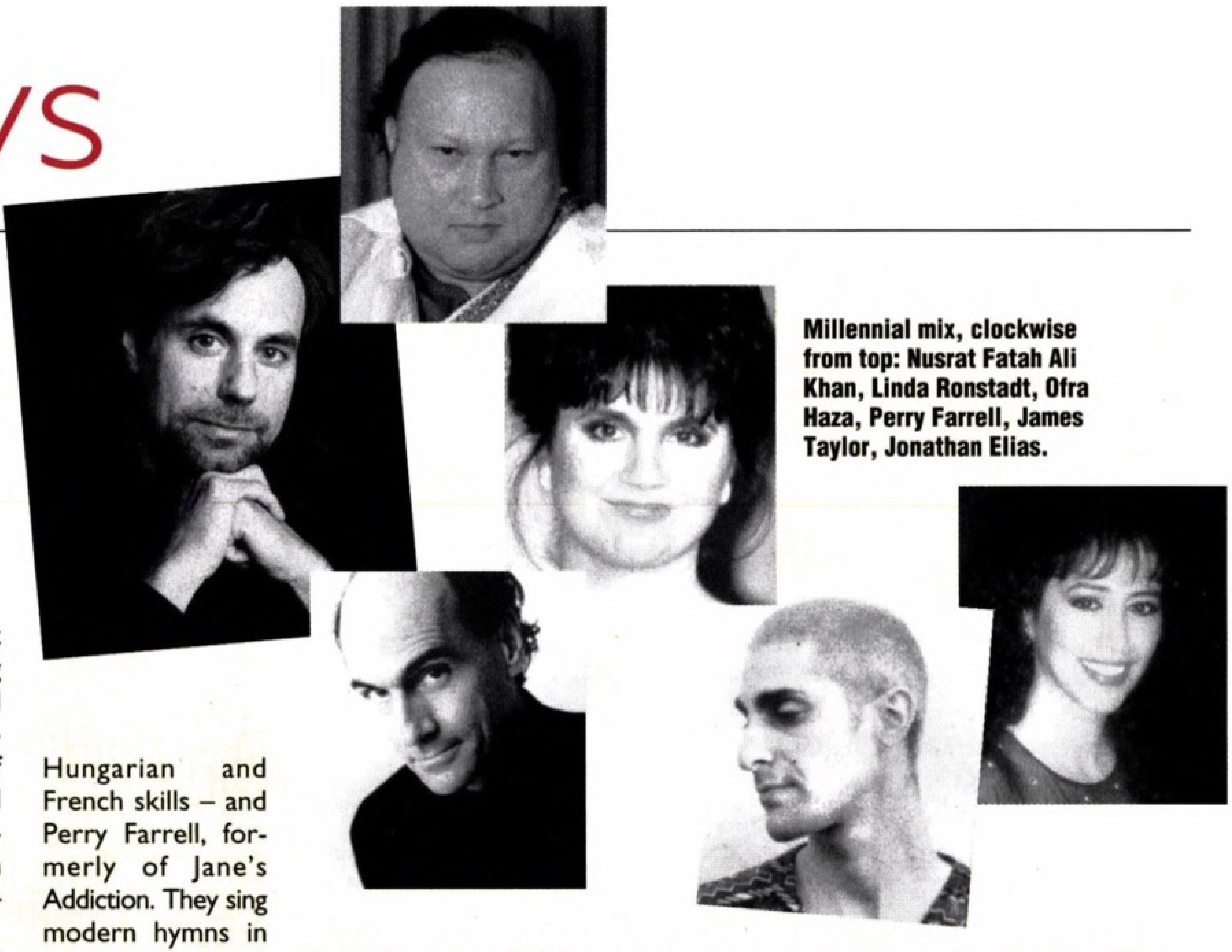
Reviews

film

The Prayer Cycle

by **Jonathan Elias**

(Sony Classical SK60569 CD)



Millennial mix, clockwise from top: Nusrat Fatah Ali Khan, Linda Ronstadt, Ofra Haza, Perry Farrell, James Taylor, Jonathan Elias.

Prepare yourselves, for the end is nigh. At least for the next few months, until the big bells strike in the new year and, in the cold light of the morning after, executives everywhere begin to contemplate the piles of unsold millennium mugs and t-shirts and wonder why. If the millennium hadn't existed – by dint of a particular calendar and an exclusive focus on Christian time-keeping – it might have been necessary to invent it.

In music – and to use the well-intentioned Jonathan Elias as an unfortunate example – things are a little more tasteful. No furry mouse-mats or 'Millenarians do it for 1,000 years' baseball caps. Music affords a time for reflection, for spirituality, for embracing the human potential. Or so the sloganeers tell us. **The Prayer Cycle** – 'a timely hymn to human unity in the face of oppression and uncertainty', as the PR guff describes it – is a pleasant enough if schmaltzy offering. There's an orchestra, chorus and a panoply of soloists including the late *qawwali* virtuoso Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Yemenite Ofra Haza, Tibetan Yungchen Lhamo and rockers Alanis Morissette – here showing off her Hungarian and French skills – and Perry Farrell, formerly of Jane's Addiction. They sing modern hymns in a Babel of languages – Latin, Swahili and Mali, plus all the usual suspects. It somehow feels that all bases linguistic and religious included are being covered in an attempt to embrace a blanket spirituality. The effect of Elias' nine sonorous hymns, each dedicated to a single theme such as mercy, grace and compassion, is frankly numbing.

The test of a millennial record is simple. Ask two questions: would it exist without this accident of date? Is it capable of an independent existence? The answer should be immediately apparent. **The Prayer Cycle** is, without doubt, a millennial record. But let's not be too harsh on either its composer or its guests. Its expedience is not necessarily a cynical ploy, for it's difficult to resist being caught up in great cultural sweeps of emotion. If one such sweep has been the expression of a yearning for a type of spirituality suited for today's secular age, then music has been at its forefront. It's arguable that many records of recent years, ranging from the blissed-out trance tunes of dance floors to the huge 'new age' market and the 'holy minimalist' composers such as Arvo Pärt and Gorecki, fulfil this need. All art is, to use an ugly phrase, a cultural product. And some art is more of a cultural product than others.

Politics ☆
Entertainment ☆☆ LG

books

Cracking the Gender Code: Who Rules the Wired World?

by **Melanie Stewart Millar**
Second Story Press, Canada
(ISBN 1 896764 14 2)

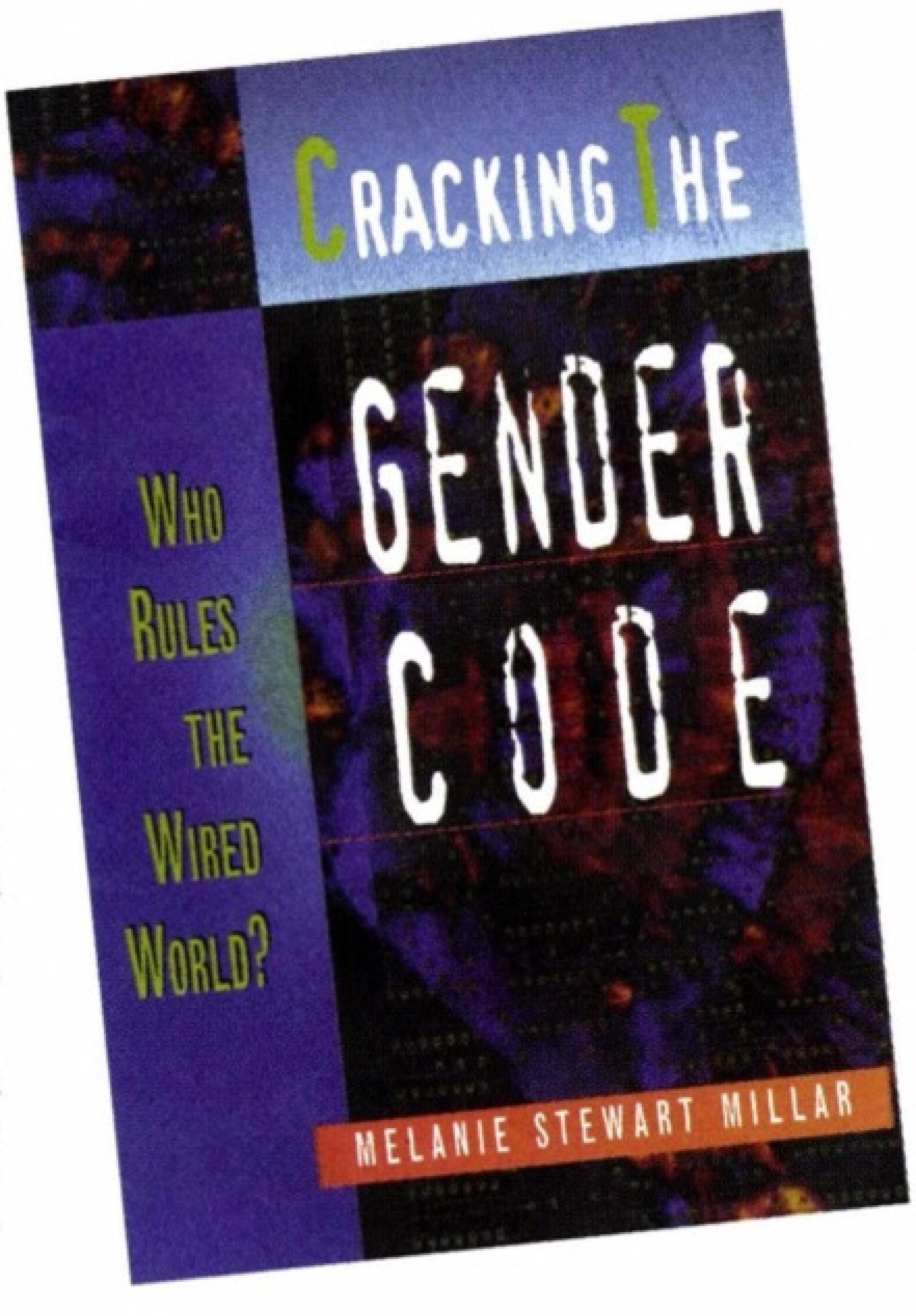
Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace

by **McKenzie Wark**
Pluto Press Australia/Central Books,UK
(ISBN 1 8640 3045 3 / ISBN 1 871204 16 X)

If the fact that *Time* magazine's 'The Century's Greatest Scientists and Thinkers' includes only one woman in around 20 profiles does not convince you that men dominate modern technology, then **Cracking the Gender Code: Who Rules the Wired World** will.

The book's first chapter makes it clear that women's technological limits are not set by lack of talent, as it traces female innovations from early agriculture to the first computer language. What does keep women in their place, Melanie Stewart Millar reveals, is a clear line of élite male control that defines the mass of cyberspace we call 'the web'.

The issue, argues Stewart Millar, is not just that women – especially those who are poor, black or migrant – are underrepresented online. She presses our panic buttons by illustrating how computer corporations help create and uphold a 'hegemonic culture of backlash that once again seeks to discipline feminine independence'.



The punchline of the book is its insight into the world of *Wired* magazine – *the* computer journal of the US. *Wired*'s élite readership, according to an e-mail of a customer service representative, is 'mostly well-educated white guys. Surprise!' The magazine and its corporate sponsors, says Stewart Millar, transform the computer geek into the master of a 'technology rules' future. And although the book's cultural analysis is focused sharply on North America, any web-user will benefit from its feminist critique. Academic but rarely inaccessible, **Cracking the Gender Code**, will shock you with the power these 'hypermacho computer geeks' and their corporate allies have and what they want to do with it. If you care about women's rights, the *Wired* world is anything but user-friendly.

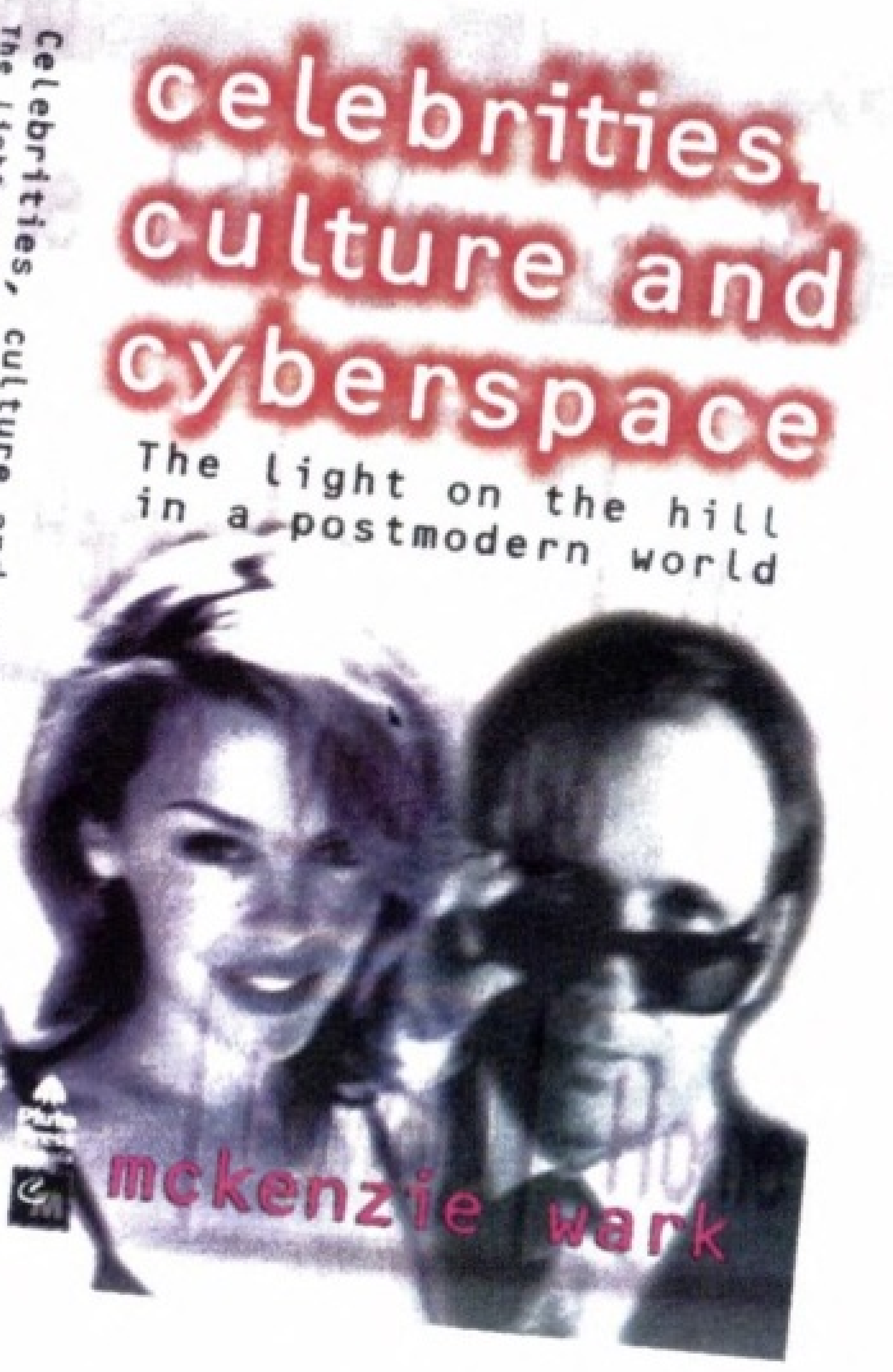
Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ AR

Also venturing into cyberspace – and a few other places besides – is media critic McKenzie Wark's latest offering, **Celebrities, Culture & Cyberspace**. Wark gives readers not only a sharp analysis of popular culture, but uses this to examine the fate of the labour movement. He shows how popular culture operates at more than one level, neither simply as mirrors nor as scripts. His forays into that very peculiar set of celebrities, culture and cyberspace demonstrate that radical and progressive change is still possible.

He advocates a confident activism, urging that we do something instead of just complaining. And he shows us what can be done within the media itself, creatively and proactively.

This is an excellent introduction to how the media constitutes a common world, within which cultures negotiate by way of images and stories that bear the imprint of famous faces, using their mix of cultural and political celebrities. It is a joint lesson in the culture of politics and the politics of culture.

Wark also gives readers a basis for reading 'class' in terms of access to information: the cosmopolitan versus the suburban. Here the power of the group should not be underestimated. According to Wark, today's suburban info-proletarian will, like Marx's economic proletariat, resist and the unjust social order. Unless the fruits of the production of information are shared, cyberspace capitalism will itself be resisted, he argues.


celebrities, culture and cyberspace
The light on the hill in a postmodern world
mckenzie wark
Celebrities, culture and cyberspace
The light on the hill in a postmodern world
mckenzie wark

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ GF

STAR RATING

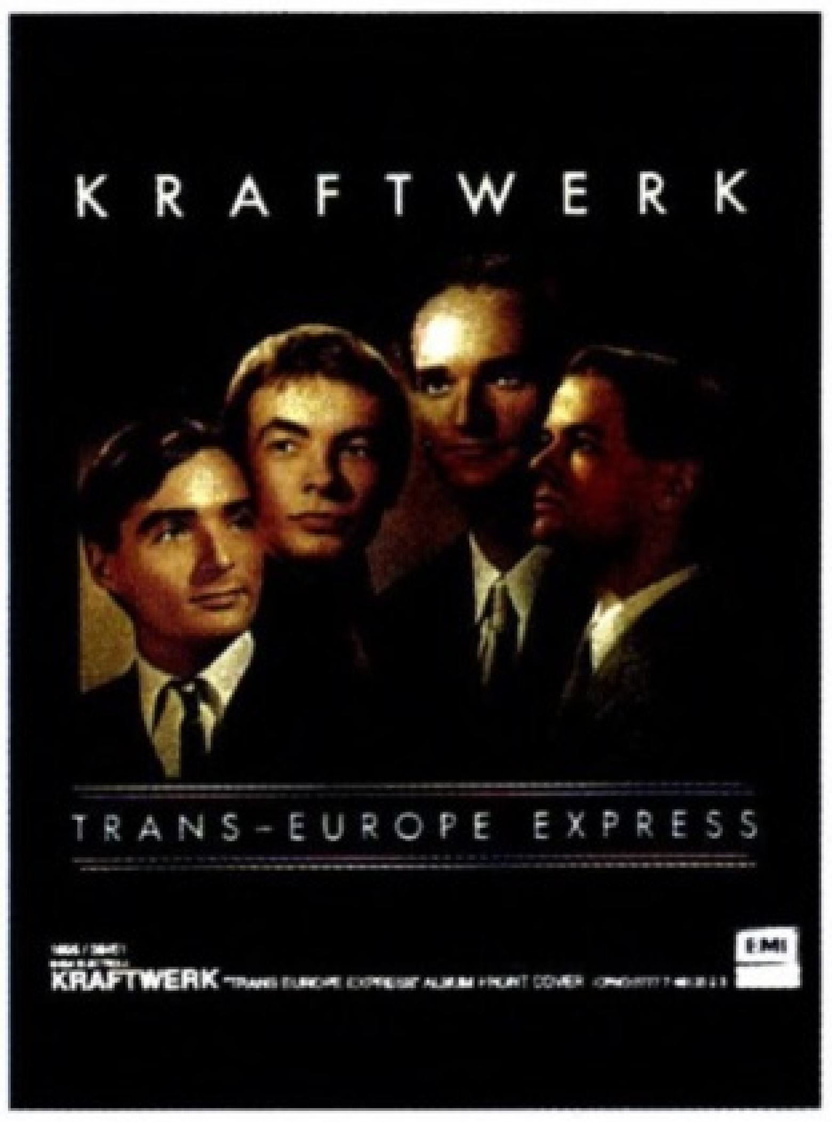
Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

THE CLASSIC

Kraftwerk

... being the group that revisits the human past by way of the mechanical future.

MUSIC, as with any other art, gets its sense of depth from its counterpoint with its past. So how, one might ask, do artists and their public both respond to art whose history is unforgivably compromised? In the case of Germany, it is a question that might be levelled at all art since 1933 – sometimes expressed in the idea that 'there can be no art after Auschwitz'. A novel way in which a past may be addressed, paradoxically, is by going headlong into the future. This is what Kraftwerk, one of Germany's most extraordinary and beautiful post-war creations, has done. The group began simply: Florian Schneider and Ralf Hütter met in 1968, while students at the music Conservatoire in their home town, Dusseldorf. Forming Kraftwerk out of the ruins of a former band, Organisation, the two set to making their own synthesizers and electronic percussion machines. Conventional instruments were quickly dropped and, in keeping with the interest expressed by both psychedelic rock bands and from the developing strand of minimalism within classical music, the duo experimented with simple rhythms and repetitive structures. This in itself was nothing new, even though the idea of electronic music was still radical and often allied to the new breed of classical composers, Stockhausen and John Cage amongst them. Indeed, Kraftwerk arrived at a time when a fluidity between musical genres existed: on many occasions the group shared platforms with Philip Glass and similar artists.



Yet despite its forward-looking technology, there was much about the band that looked backwards. It looked to the German baroque – indeed, Kraftwerk's highly influential 1977 album **Trans-Europe Express**, is a more subtle exposition of well-tempered synthesizers than Walter Carlos' switched-on records ever were. The band also looked back to romanticism; to a Fritz Lang-inspired modernism; to the bucolic elegies of the German Wandervogel movement and to the melancholy of Stockhausen's lonely radio transmissions. There was passion in its restraint, perhaps the direct result of the Nazi years: 'Our roots were in the culture that was stopped by Hitler; the school of Bauhaus, of German expressionism,' Hütter once said.

To this one could also add constructivism, something that was laid bare during Kraftwerk's robotnik Man Machine phase, when the band commissioned robot replicas of themselves and outraged rock purists with an idea of playing a world tour simultaneously. The third album and first commercial success was **Autobahn** (1974) – a 20-minute epic describing a barely changing landscape and a similarly immutable lyric, 'Wir fahren, fahren, fahren auf die Autobahn' (We're driving, we're driving, we're driving on the motorway). Whatever favourable epithets were applied to Kraftwerk after this success, the band's great strength lay in a combination of music and concept. Both **Trans-Europe Express** and **Man Machine** (1978) expounded a crystalline music, as precise in its structure as a fugue by Bach and as moving in the way it contained itself. That the music had a wide provenance was intentional: Kraftwerk members themselves spoke of their homage to the Beach Boys, but illustrated their album covers with sketches from Schubert written out in the manner of Stockhausen as an endless, circular score.

There was nothing ever superfluous about these musicians who, ensconced in their Dusseldorf studio, Kling Klang, fostered an image of mysterious seclusion – and continue to do so. It's rumoured that even their record company, EMI, does not have their telephone number. Such is the unique nature of the band's deal, that it's able to record whatever it wants, whenever it wants.

That Kraftwerk has entered the history books as the audible link between high art and pop art is undeniable. Feted as the godfathers of modern dance music, Kraftwerk has an audience which was not even born when the band formed. Whenever it does break its self-imposed unofficial embargo on live performances – at Luton Hoo's Tribal Gathering in 1997 or a Spanish new music festival last year, for example – there is enormous, palpable excitement. Without doubt the band is one of the most significant forces in popular music.

But otherwise Kraftwerk is near-dormant. There was been no new record since **The Mix** (1991), an album which revisited old tracks with updated technology. A new track was unveiled at Luton Hoo but the band is not interested in releasing it. Has Kraftwerk hit a creative brick wall? We don't know, and are unlikely to. These musicians were never great ones for interviews – it's part of their mystique. But, in post-war Germany, their strategy to revisit the human past by way of a mechanical future is an achievement that demands celebration. ■

Trans-Europe Express, Man Machine, Autobahn and *The Mix* are on the EMI label.

by **Louise Gray**

Reviews

Seen from a women's point of view – satire and society in Senegal.

music

Tableau Ferraille

directed by **Moussa Sene Absa**
(distributed by California Newsreel)

A small fishing town on the coast of Senegal suffers from poverty and the indignity of its name – 'scrap heap'. In the 1990s it also faces the collision of tradition and the modern capitalism of the West. The film opens exuberantly. A young boy, pulling a home-made toy car, runs gracefully along a beautiful beach past boats and nets, then flies headlong into the crowds of the city. The camera in its hand-held excitement races to keep up. It's a beginning with high expectations and a child's point of view, introducing viewers to life on the streets.

Flashback to a few years earlier. A young local man, named Daam runs for a Deputy position in the national Government, and wins. As he moves up through the ranks, by ambition and luck, he gains both prestige and two beautiful wives. Daam retains a few principles and he works hard, but he also loves the good life and his ambitions make him callous, especially towards his wives.

When he becomes a government minister the dry rot of corruption sets in and wealth that has come too easily takes its toll. But director Sene Absa does not settle for an easy tale of the country-boy led astray. He prefers a story told on a wide canvas, and as the tragedy unfolds we see that all elements of the society carry flaws. Corruption does not flow solely from power or the big city – its sources lie equally among the small-time operators raised in the town itself.

Neither does the film point a smug finger at modernization alone. The story is told from a woman's point of view, that of Gagne, Daam's first wife. Her troubles with the local women's committees in both the small coastal town and in Dakar, the capital, reveal elements of repressive tradition. The urban culture of modern Dakar gets its share of satire: Daam's second wife, the ambitious Kine, wants to manage an art gallery. Her latest passion is a painting created by a rising star in the art world. 'He's a Zulu,' she informs Daam.

In the tradition of Senegal's most famous filmmaker, Ousmane Sembene, Sene Absa finds the corruption and decay within his country unsettling. He also knows that easy answers don't exist. Yet, for all this satire and social criticism **Tableau Ferraille** pulls its viewers along with a rather light touch. Nothing gets too heavy and ponderous. Daam comes across as more pathetic and sad than evil. He notes wryly, as trouble and scandal move in: 'Politicians go down, never business men.' The film works in a contemporary Western style, creating short scene-fragments with minimal dialogue and exposition, unlike the slower-paced African classics of the 1970s.

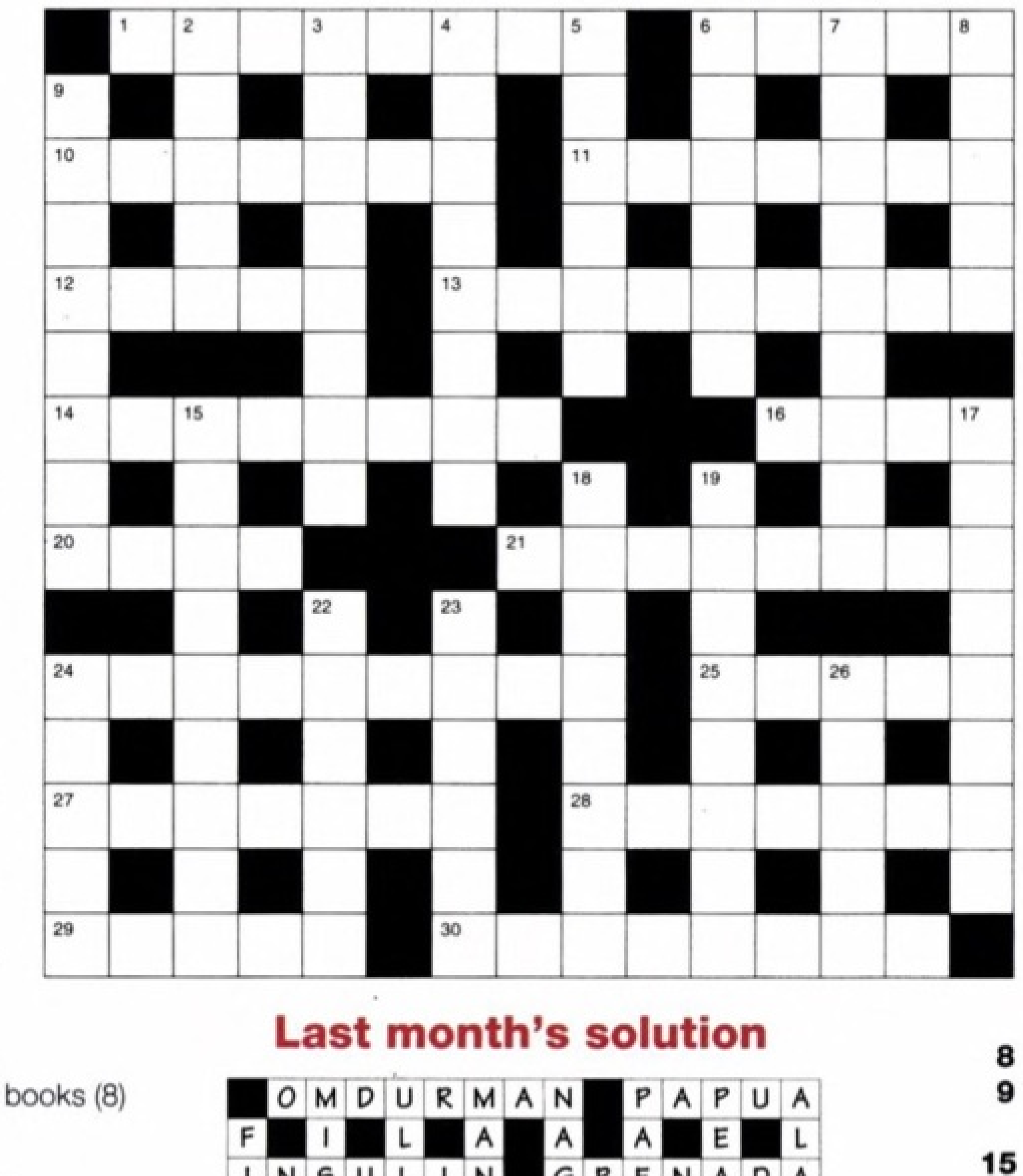
There are times, however, when the lightly sketched scenes and loosely tructured plot threaten to unravel into confusion. Sene Absa's avoidance of easy answers may pull the viewer off on one tangent too many. Still, **Tableau Ferraille** carries a charge as a sophisticated satire – a lively, very human 'scrap heap' on the sea that stays with you long after the film has ended.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG

Reviewers: **Louise Gray, Anouk Ride, George Fisher, Peter Steven**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The **NI** Crossword

34 by Axe



CRYPTIC

Across

1 It's manual work to circle a volcano (5,3)
6 In Ethiopia is a French cat with an accent (5)
10 Bacillus for which worker goes to hospital to receive inconclusive X-Ray treatment (7)
11 The overthrown president sees the point after total annihilation (7)
12 See 3
13 Old folks come from Church with a student and senior college members (9)
14 French water or a Spanish port? (2,6)
16 Country (but not Western) lady (4)
20,22 Filipina's railway company originally had a queen as head before Union interference and foreclosure (4,6)
21 Sari mart in controversy at the Sikh centre... (8)
24 ...where residual holy souvenirs are found in receptacle... (9)
25 ...and lucky God's about at the centre when they are scattered (5)
27 They bring news from Rome to the Cayman Islands' circle, protected by those in holy orders (7)
28 Wedgwood setting representing pre-Roman Italy? (7)
29 Western kid was on TV describing fish from Lake Michigan (5)
30 Party for Mandela, as seen in newspaper, film company made with O'Higgins capital (8)

Down

2 A first-class officer is captured in Siberia (5)
3,12 Ulster's own national direction comes first (8,5)
4 Former idols left over words which are the subject of books (8)
5 See 23
6 Directed in, as well, (Spanish) American city (6)
7 Grenades, monsieur, are tossed. They uphold the law (9)
8 Records abound of keys of a type famously made in Spanish 6 (5)
9 Limousine – the French regional type – found in Aquitaine (8)
15 States that girl is North American at heart (9)
17 Northerner getting directions during conquest (8)
18 Baptise sitting up around a fireplace where God and his Angels sit (8)
19 State of Australia's Hong Kong capital (8)
22 See 20
23,5 Exchanging leadership with Egyptian head; Ark's site losing right to female Arab leader! (6,6)
24 Celtic style the 3,12 adopted by 3,12 7 (5)
26 Scramble for college and university entrants around the Mediterranean resort (5)

QUICK

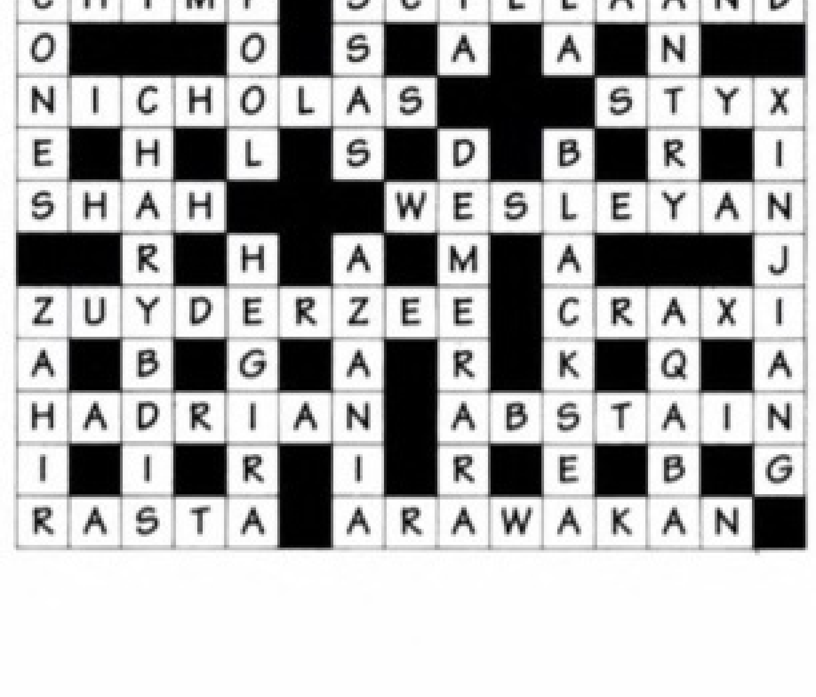
Across

1 The world's second-highest active volcano (4169m) (5,3)
6 Troubled northern province of Ethiopia (5)
10 Sheep- or cattle-borne bacterium harvested for biological weapons (7)
11 Chilean president 1970-73 (7)
12 See 3
13 Biblical peoples whose capital was Ur (9)
14 Premier city and port of Spanish Galicia (2,6)
16 Arabian sultanate (4)
20,22 President of the Philippines, 1986-92 (4,6)
21 Punjabi capital of the Sikhs (8)
24 Depository for, or alluding to, religious keepsakes (9)
25 Greek goddess of fortune (5)
27 Papal legates (7)
28 Home of the predominant civilization in Italy before the rise of Rome (7)
29 Salmon-like fish of the North American Great Lakes (5)
30 City of Chile, used as a base by Bernardo O'Higgins (8)

Down

2 Siberian area of Russia, or a range of mountains stretching from Kazakhstan to Mongolia and China (5)
3,12 Constituent nationality of the United Kingdom (8,5)
4 Dictionaries (8)
5 See 23
6 Sword-making city of old Castile (6)
7 The French armed policemen (9)
8 Duelling swords (5)
9 Town on the Gironde, south of Bordeaux; the name of a famous US automobile (8)
15 Collectively, two of the original thirteen United States of America (9)
17 Viking or Dane perhaps (8)
18 The fifth chamber of Heaven, one of pure fire, and the seat of the deity (8)
19 Capital of British Columbia (8)
22 See 20
23,5 Joint winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 (6,6)
24 Nordic or Celtic script (5)
26 Largest island in the Ionian Sea (5)

Last month's solution



■	O	M	D	U	R	M	A	N	■	P	A	P	U	A
F	■	I	■	L	■	A	■	A	■	A	■	E	■	L
I	N	S	U	L	I	N	■	G	R	E	N	A	D	A
R	■	T	■	A	■	A	■	O	■	L	■	S	■	N
C	H	I	M	P	■	S	C	Y	L	L	A	A	N	D
O	■	■	■	O	■	S	■	A	■	A	■	N	■	■
N	I	C	H	O	L	A	S	■	■	■	S	T	Y	X
E	■	H	■	L	■	S	■	D	■	B	■	R	■	I
S	H	A	H	■	■	■	W	E	S	L	E	Y	A	N
■	■	R	■	H	■	A	■	M	■	A	■	■	■	J
Z	U	Y	D	E	R	Z	E	E	■	C	R	A	X	I
A	■	B	■	G	■	A	■	R	■	K	■	Q	■	A
H	A	D	R	I	A	N	■	A	B	S	T	A	I	N
I	■	I	■	R	■	I	■	R	■	E	■	B	■	G
R	A	S	T	A	■	A	R	A	W	A	K	A	N	■

Dog Baloo

Peace accords have yet to puncture the culture of impunity in Guatemala, says **Chris Curnow**.

TOURISM is way down, they tell me. Hurricane Mitch has frightened everyone away. It certainly has a lot to answer for – 389 dead, 106,609 injured and 749,533 affected in Guatemala alone. But I know from the time I spent working here two years ago that there are other 'hurricanes' raging through this beautiful and terrible country.

My return to Guatemala City coincides with the second anniversary of the signing of the final peace accords. President Arzu has decreed a huge public fireworks display for the evening and declared this to be the Day of Pardon. As my friends Pedro and Carla drive me from the airport they say: 'How can we pardon the human-rights abuses that happened to our friends and family – indeed to us – if no-one has even said "Sorry"?'

In April last year, just one block from my friends' house, the Catholic Bishop, Monseñor Gerardi, was brutally murdered two days after the publication of the report *Guatemala: Never Again*. This collection of oral histories was put together by a project team of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office. Brave Guatemalans, finally taking the opportunity to speak their truth, gave graphic accounts and clear statistical evidence showing that the Army was the perpetrator of the overwhelming majority of human-rights abuses during the 36 years of institutionalized state repression in this country.

After the Bishop's murder, the authorities gaoled a dog by the name of Baloo. Father Orantes, the owner of the dog, was accused of a 'crime of passion' against the Bishop. The dog was put down. Regardless of who was responsible, there's no doubt that the Bishop's murder has had the effect of diverting media attention away from the contents of the report.

In the morning I go for a walk past the Peace Flame in the Central Square. I notice it is being re-ignited for tonight's 'show'. It was lit for the peace signing in December 1996 and burned for a few weeks until the gas ran out.

Returning to my friends' house I discover the contents of my backpack strewn over the floor of my room. Carla tells me they have just been robbed. She does not appear to me to be traumatized, but Guatemalans are good at hiding this sort of stuff. Even so, what has happened is quite shocking.

Pedro and Carla run a small business and so keep their front door open on to the street. Pedro had popped out with his two-year-old son on errands. Carla was inside with their two young secretaries when four men armed with pistols walked in, yanked the phones from the walls and bound the women with the cable. They took personal effects, money and jewellery, then started to put the computers and electrical items into sacks. At this point they heard Pedro return, so they left, marching up the street with their pistols down the front of their jeans.

Pedro later confesses to me that, seeing them from his car, he was *that* close to deliberately ramming them against the wall – just to maim them would have been enough. He knows that, in the unlikely event of their being apprehended, they can bribe their way to freedom within days. In small rural towns all over Guatemala, where the police are in fear of bandit gangs, people have taken to lynching suspects straight away, before the police can be persuaded to take bribes and set them free.

I read in the newspaper about the postponement of the popular referendum planned for earlier this year. The referendum would have asked Guatemalans if they want a new Constitution that incorporates the principles of the peace accords. This is opposed by a group calling itself the 'Defenders of the Constitution', which represents the chamber of commerce, industry and agro-exporters – the traditional oligarchy in Guatemala. One of the accords deals with compensation for ancestral lands stolen during the civil war, and with land redistribution. As soon as this was mentioned the 'Defenders of the Constitution' moved to block its path.

AMEDEO VERGANI

With stoic Guatemalan style Pedro and Carla put the morning's assault behind them. Night falls and the President's 'show' begins. 'Come on, let's go,' they say. 'We'll have a beer and celebrate your return. And we can watch how they waste money in Guatemala.'

Above us the fireworks explode, lighting the Cathedral columns where fresh marble tablets bear some of the names of hundreds upon thousands of Guatemalans who were killed, tortured and 'disappeared'. President Arzu – like Bill Clinton on a recent visit – speaks of forgiveness. It's the Day of Pardon, he says. But he does not name the guilty people.

As the light on the columns fades, I wonder if the Peace Flame will be extinguished once more when the show has finished. ■

Chris Curnow spent two years as an Australian Volunteer Abroad in Guatemala. He recently returned as leader for a Community Aid Abroad Study Tour visiting community groups in the country. He is now a Programme Officer for Australian Volunteers International, Sydney. The names of individuals in this piece have been changed.

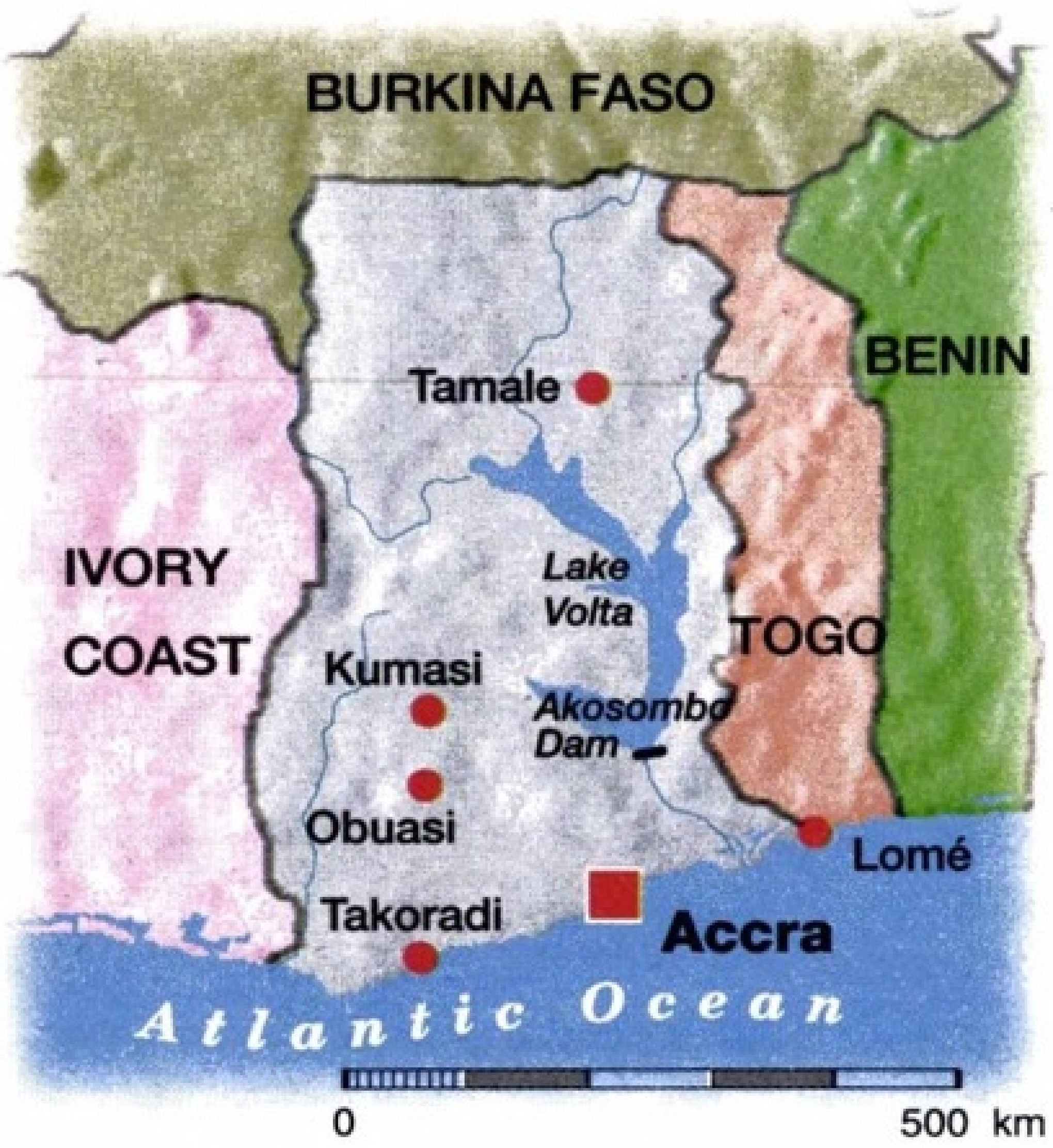
Country profile

Ghana

If an award were to be given for the country with the friendliest people in West Africa, Ghana would win hands down. Ghanaian hospitality is proverbial and the ready smiles in the markets, on the street corners and in the *trotro* (minibus), leave a lingering impression on the mind.

Accra, the capital, with almost two million inhabitants, remains the liveliest city along the West African coast. Tourists not destined for the beaches used to travel through rolling hills toward the Ashanti region, which contains the Obuasi gold mine – reputed to be the world's richest single mine – and Lake Bosumtwe, the only natural lake in West Africa. But they are just as likely now to head for the central region, where the tropical semi-deciduous rainforest is being developed for ecotourism in 'reserves'.

The rise of tourism in Ghana is an offshoot of the economic recovery programme launched in 1983. The changes are visible enough: roads and ports are being rebuilt; gold has replaced cocoa as the country's leading export and consumer goods are everywhere. But not everyone shares in the success. The cedi, the national currency, continues to drop against the major currencies due to inflation and more than 30 per cent of Ghanaians live in conditions of hard-core poverty. Many factories producing for the local market have had to close, unable to compete with the foreign goods flooding the market as a result of trade-liberalization policies.



These policies have won Ghana the plaudits of the international financial institutions, the World Bank and the IMF. The country is continually cited as an example of good management and commended for establishing a multiparty democracy under the leadership of President Jerry John Rawlings, a former flight-lieutenant and revolutionary who is a convert to free-market economics and parliamentary democracy.

Rawlings seized power – for the second time – in 1982 in protest at the Government's preoccupation with foreign capital. But his own preoccupation has been even more marked, especially since he submitted himself for election: since 1986 around 200 of the 300 state-owned companies have been privatized and Ghana's health and education systems have suffered badly under the IMF-inspired policies of the 1980s and 1990s.

Whatever you think of its economic policies, or its professed goal to be a middle-income nation in the next decade (its current GNP per capita stands at just $360), Ghana is unquestionably a force for stability in a West African region beset by conflict. It has played a key role in resolving regional conflicts and this diplomatic reliability can only be enhanced now that it has a native son, Kofi Annan, as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Ghana's political parties are now gearing up for the next general elections in the year 2000. As usual, the contest will be between the ruling National Democratic Congress and the main opposition, the New Patriotic Party. Rawlings himself is bowing out, in deference to the constitution which allows a President only two terms. He will remain a major force, though his attempt to ensure an even smoother succession – offering his wife as the ruling party's next presidential candidate – was strangled at birth by widespread opposition.

Ghana was once a beacon for anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism – under inspirational leader Kwame Nkrumah it was the first sub-Saharan country to gain independence from colonialism, as the British flag was run down on 6 March 1957. Now it is a beacon of a rather different kind: the World Bank has called it 'black Africa's economic showcase'. This is probably not what Nkrumah had in mind when he said at an anti-colonial victory rally: 'The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of Africa.' ■

Mike Anane

AT A GLANCE

MARK EDWARDS

Leader: President Jerry John Rawlings.
Economy: GNP per capita $360 (UK $19,600). When last profiled in 1987 this was almost exactly the same, at $350.
Monetary unit: Cedi.
Main exports: gold (40%), cocoa & its products (25%), timber & its products (13%).
External debt: $6,202 million, or $348 per person.
Debt service: 27% of exports.
Tourism is now the third-largest source of foreign exchange. Agriculture is still the mainstay of the economy, accounting for 50% of GDP and employing 60% of the working population.
People: 18.3 million.
Health: Infant mortality 68 per 1,000 live births (Nigeria 112, Canada 6 per 1,000).
Environment: Only about two million hectares of the country's closed forest remain, 30 per cent of the original area, and 22,000 hectares a year are lost to loggers, farmers and bush fires.
Culture: Akan 44%, Moshi-Dagomba 16%, Ewe 13%, Ga 8%.
Religion: Indigenous beliefs 38%, Muslim 30%, Christian 24%, other 8%.
Languages: English (official), Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe and Ga.

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

***Sources** The World Guide 1999/2000, The State of the World's Children 1999, Africa Review 1998, Forestry Department of Government of Ghana.*

Previously profiled June 1987.

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
An urban élite may have more consumer goods but the gap between rich and poor has increased markedly under structural adjustment.
1987★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Heavy reliance on imported goods and a substantial foreign debt.
1987★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Inequalities exist but more women rise to occupy important positions each year.
1987★★★

LITERACY ★★
Not much improvement at 65%. 30% of children receive no primary schooling.
1987★★★

FREEDOM ★★★★
The country's constitution has given the media a new lease of life: private newspapers are boldly independent and regularly expose government shortcomings and corruption.
1987★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★
58 years (Nigeria 52 years, Japan 80 years). The health system has been badly hit under structural adjustment.
1987★★★

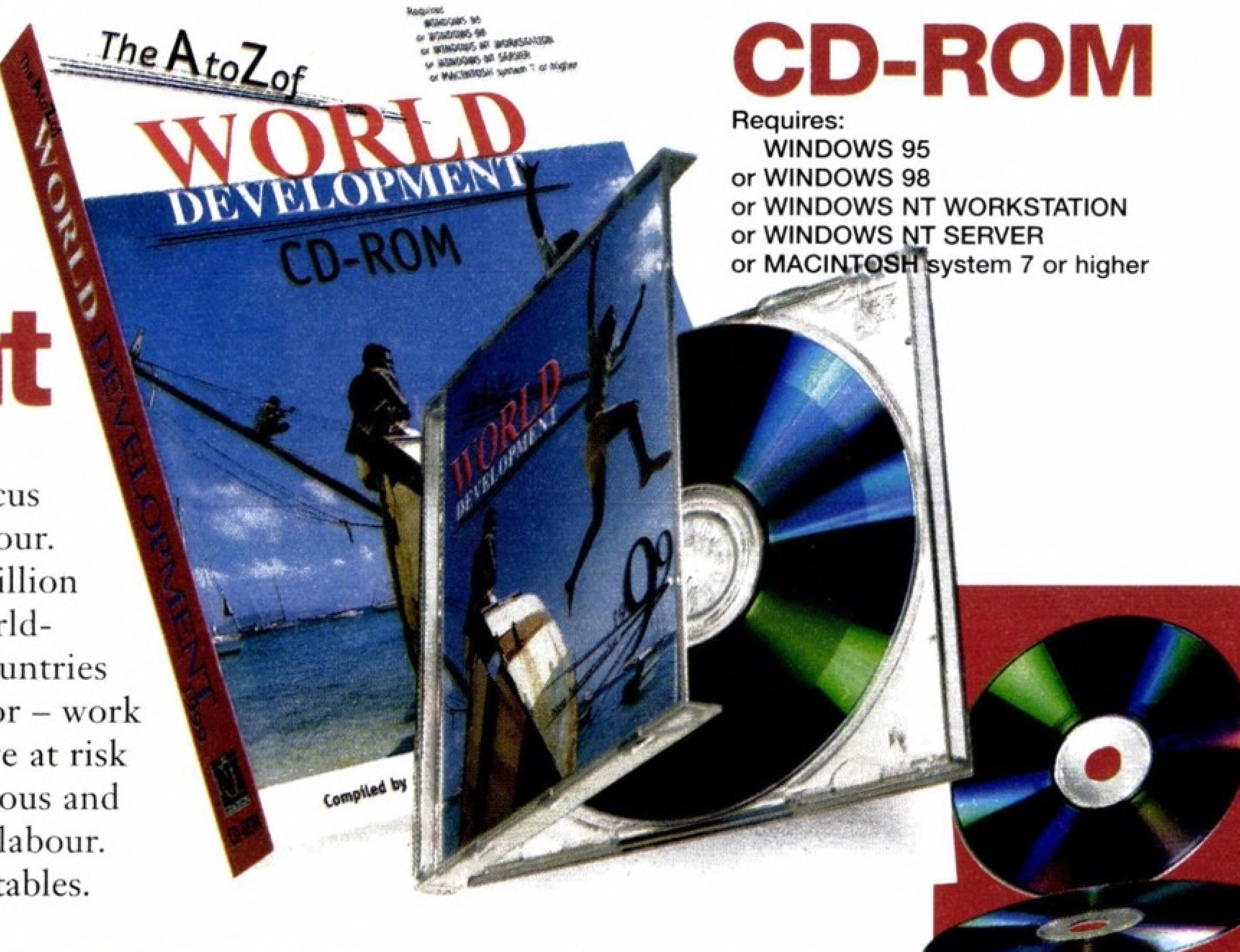
POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★★
Ghana now has stable political institutions with significant decentralization. But the impact on the poor of the IMF-approved economics embraced so wholeheartedly by the Rawlings Government has been devastating. The transition to the post-Rawlings era will be a significant test of the new democracy.

The A-Z of World Development

CD-ROM

Requires:
WINDOWS 95
or WINDOWS 98
or WINDOWS NT WORKSTATION
or WINDOWS NT SERVER
or MACINTOSH system 7 or higher


Requires:
WINDOWS 95
or WINDOWS 98
or WINDOWS NT WORKSTATION
or WINDOWS NT SERVER
or MACINTOSH system 7 or higher
The A to Z of
WORLD
DEVELOPMENT
CD-ROM
WORLD DEVELOPMENT
Compiled by

THE **A-Z of World Development** CD-ROM is the interactive production of the book of the same name. There are entries on more than 600 development topics ranging from Rastafarianism to Toxic Chemicals, from East Timor to Population. It includes some 250 pictures, 140 charts, graphs and maps together with all the text from the book.

PLUS

Some of the best and most up-to-date statistical information in the world, filed by every nation to the UN Statistical Office in New York. These **UN Social Indicators** include data on Housing, Health, Unemployment, Water, Literacy, Income and Economic Activity, Human Settlements, Youth and Elderly Populations. It is a superb reference point for any project needing backing statistical information.

PLUS

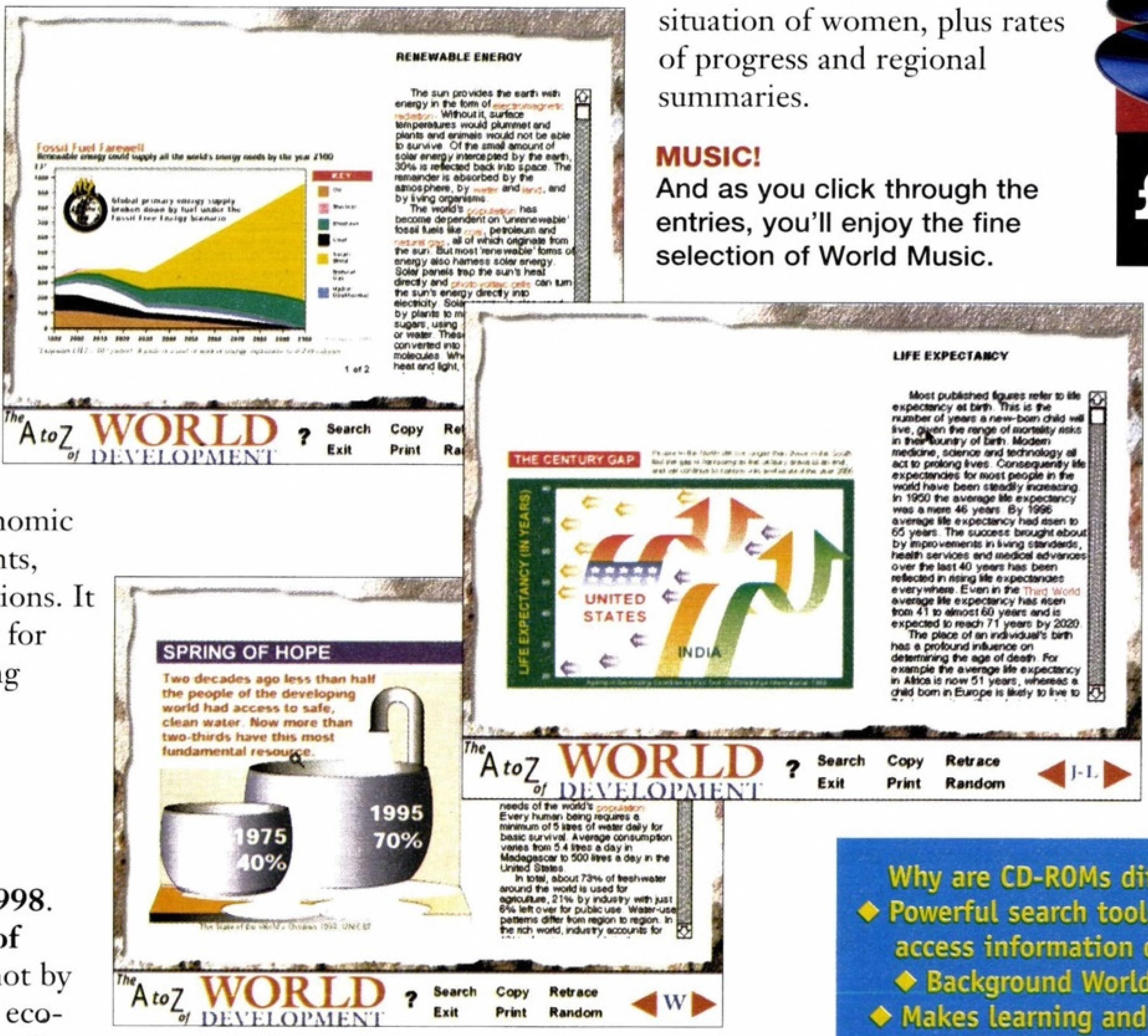
Front-line UNICEF publications:

◆ **Progress of Nations 1998**. Each year **The Progress of Nations** ranks countries, not by the traditional yardstick of economic growth, but by the well-being of their children. Particular emphasis is paid to: civil rights, child immunization, adolescence and homelessness.

◆ **The State of the World's Children 1997 Report**. Includes:

- Progress over The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Special focus on child labour. Over 250 million children worldwide – in countries rich and poor – work and many are at risk from hazardous and exploitative labour.
- Statistical tables.

◆ **The State of the World's Children 1998 Statistics**. These are vital indicators of care, nurture and resources that children receive in their communities and countries. They cover nutrition, health, education, demography, economic indicators and the situation of women, plus rates of progress and regional summaries.


Fossil Fuel Farewell
Renewable energy could supply all the world's energy needs by the year 2100
Global primary energy supply broken down by fuel under the Fossil Free Energy Scenario
KEY
1 of 2
The A to Z of WORLD DEVELOPMENT
?
Search
Exit
Copy
Print
Ret
Ra
THE CENTURY GAP
LIFE EXPECTANCY (IN YEARS)
UNITED STATES
INDIA
The A to Z of WORLD DEVELOPMENT
?
Search
Exit
Copy
Print
Retrace
Random
J-L
SPRING OF HOPE
1975
40%
1995
70%
The A to Z of WORLD DEVELOPMENT
?
Search
Exit
Copy
Print
Retrace
Random
W

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The sun provides the earth with energy in the form of electromagnetic radiation. Without it, surface temperatures would plummet and plants and animals would not be able to survive. Of the small amount of solar energy intercepted by the earth, 30% is reflected back into space. The remainder is absorbed by the atmosphere, by water and land, and by living organisms.

The world's population has become dependent on 'unrenewable' fossil fuels like coal, petroleum and natural gas, all of which originate from the sun. But most 'renewable' forms of energy also harness solar energy. Solar panels trap the sun's heat directly and photo-voltaic cells can turn the sun's energy directly into electricity. Sola

by plants to m

sugars, using

or water. These

converted into

molecules. Wh

heat and light,

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Most published figures refer to life expectancy at birth. This is the number of years a new-born child will live, given the range of mortality risks in their country of birth. Modern medicine, science and technology all act to prolong lives. Consequently life expectancies for most people in the world have been steadily increasing. In 1950 the average life expectancy was a mere 46 years. By 1996 average life expectancy had risen to 65 years. The success brought about by improvements in living standards, health services and medical advances over the last 40 years has been reflected in rising life expectancies everywhere. Even in the Third World average life expectancy has risen from 41 to almost 60 years and is expected to reach 71 years by 2020.

The place of an individual's birth has a profound influence on determining the age of death. For example the average life expectancy in Africa is now 51 years, whereas a child born in Europe is likely to live to

Two decades ago less than half the people of the developing world had access to safe, clean water. Now more than two-thirds have this most fundamental resource.

needs of the world's population. Every human being requires a minimum of 5 litres of water daily for basic survival. Average consumption varies from 5.4 litres a day in Madagascar to 500 litres a day in the United States.

In total, about 73% of freshwater around the world is used for agriculture, 21% by industry with just 6% left over for public use. Water-use patterns differ from region to region. In the rich world, industry accounts for

MUSIC!

And as you click through the entries, you'll enjoy the fine selection of World Music.

£29.95

Why are CD-ROMs different?

◆ Powerful search tools help you access information quickly.

◆ Background World Music.

◆ Makes learning and information retrieval easier.

Site licenses are available;
please contact your nearest
New Internationalist Office for details or
e-mail jol@newint.org (UK) or
brianl@newint.com.au (Australia)

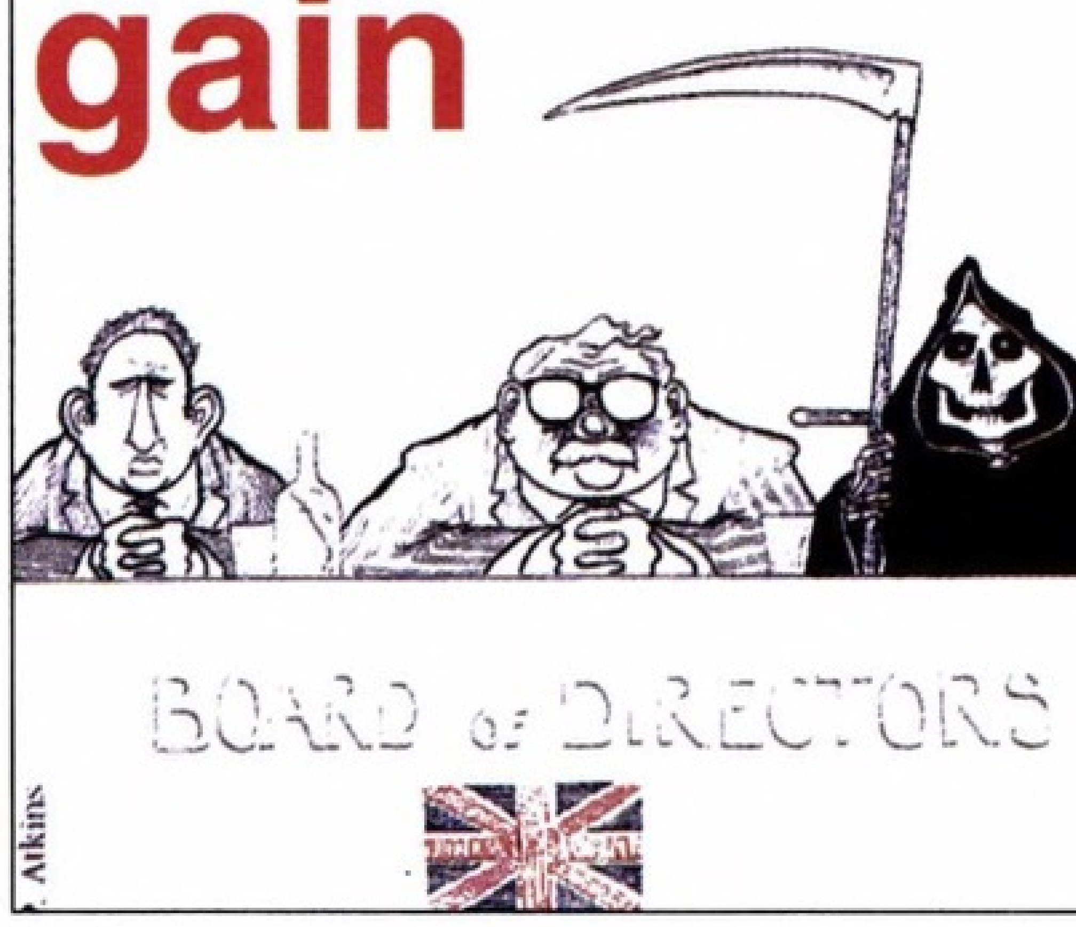
SEE ORDER FORM INSIDE THIS MAGAZINE

ISBN 1 869847 71 7

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: **Windows:** ◆ *486 DX processor or better* ◆ *8Mb RAM (16 Mb recommended)* ◆ **Windows® 3.1x** or **Windows® 95** or **Windows® 98** or **Windows NT®** ◆ *256 Color display or better* ◆ *Sound Card and Speakers* ◆ *2x speed CD-ROM drive or better* **Macintosh:** ◆ **Mac LC630** *or faster* ◆ *8Mb RAM (16 Mb recommended)* ◆ *color display* ◆ *System 7 or higher* ◆ *2x speed CD-ROM drive or faster* **All platforms:** ◆ *Web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator)* ◆ *Hard disk space may be required to install optional Adobe Acrobat Reader (5-7Mb) and Microsoft Excel Viewer software (5Mb) in order to read the bonus information from the United Nations, UNICEF and the World Bank.* **Networks:** *This product has been designed and tested to allow network operation and should function properly in any Windows or Macintosh network, including in CD stacker environments.*

GUARANTEE: IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THIS CD-ROM, JUST RETURN IT WITHIN TEN DAYS FOR A FULL NO-QUIBBLE REFUND.

Killing for gain



Amnesty International is campaigning to end the worldwide trade in instruments of pain and death.

And we need your help...

For your free campaign pack, contact:
Individual Action Team
AIUK
99-119 Rosebery Ave.
London EC1R 4RE
tel: 0171 814 6273

A spoken version, on cassette, is also available

JOURNEY LATIN AMERICA
Low cost flights and escorted group holidays. Fully bonded tour operator ABTA V2522 ATOL 2828 AITO. *Journey Latin America, 12 & 13 Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JE, UK. Tel: 0181 747 8315*

To advertise in NEW INTERNATIONALIST contact:

TERRY LOCK MEDIA SALES

3 Forest Way,
Ashtead,
Surrey KT21 1JN

Tel/Fax:
01372 276233

LifeLines

Lifelines provides vital support to prisoners on America's Death Rows, through letter-writing. If you would like to help by becoming a correspondent, please send a SAE for further details.

Lifelines, 96 Fallowfield,
Cambridge, CB4 1PF England

SERVAS
open doors, open minds.

A worldwide network of travellers & hosts to help build international peace.

Details:
SERVAS INTERNATIONAL NI,
PO Box 1035, Edinburgh,
EH3 9JQ, UK.
or for Australia:
Kevin Newham, PO BOX 1086,
Airlie Beach, Queensland 4802,
Australia.

Become an International Family

Do something positive – volunteer to welcome a young person from a different culture to your home

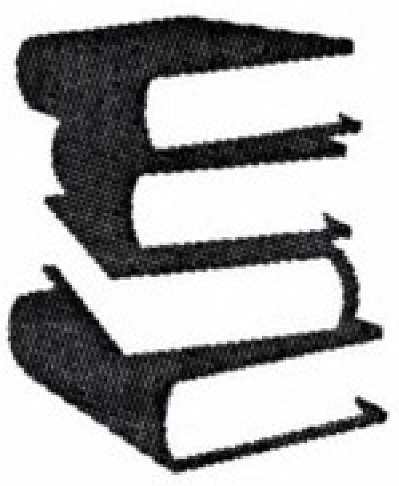
Why?
- Learn to see the world from another perspective
- Broaden the outlook of your family
- Have an unforgettable experience
- Make international friends

To be part of this intercultural experience contact:
AFS Leeming House,
Vicar Lane,
Leeds LS2 7JF
Telephone: 0113 242 6136
Fax: 0113 243 0631
e-mail: families@afs.org
AFS, a registered charity (284174) is in its 52nd year and part of an international network.

THE ANGLICAN PACIFIST FELLOWSHIP
(A Registered Charity)
believes that faith in Jesus Christ calls for the repudiation of all war.
We seek to witness to that belief within the Anglican Communion at all levels.
Enquiries to:
APF, 11 Weavers End
Hanslope, Milton Keynes MK19 7PA

SUNSEED DESERT TECHNOLOGY: GREEN WORKING HOLIDAYS; ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH IN SOUTHERN SPAIN, DESERT RECLAMATION. SOLAR ENERGY, PERMACULTURE, SUSTAINABLE LIVING – LOTS MORE! COST £60/WEEK+ – FULL BOARD, SIMPLE ACCOMMODATION, VEGETARIAN WHOLEFOOD.
SAE: **unit-n, PO BOX 2000, Cambridge CB3 4UJ. Tel: 01273 387731**

Can you sell book rights for us?



We are looking for an Oxford-based part-time book rights sales manager initially for one year's contract to help extend this area of our work. New Internationalist Publications is a collectively-run company concerned with issues of world development. It publishes 3-5 new titles a year, has a useful back list and also puts out the monthly *New Internationalist* magazine. The magazine has 70,000 subscribers world-wide and offices in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The books include reference, cookery, other non-fiction and some gift titles. We are looking for co-publishers and co-distributors in the UK and North America as well as other language sales. The successful candidate will have experience of this side of publishing and good selling ability. They would be based in Oxford and working half-time (17.5 hours a week). An ability to speak German, French or Spanish is desirable. Salary £20,900 (pro rata). Please write for an application form and details (no CVs) to:

Véronique Szerauc, New Internationalist Publications,
55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW.

Tel 01865 728181, Fax 01865 793152
e-mail:ni@newint.org

Closing date for applications: 12th July.
Interviews between 19th and 23rd July.
Applications particularly welcome from women and people from ethnic minorities.

New Internationalist
Publications

ETHICAL INVESTMENTS
Profit with a conscience

FREE impartial advice on ethical pensions, mortgages, savings and life assurance.

KINGSWOOD Consultants
Independent Financial Advisers

Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority PIA Reg No 52146
PIA

Founding member of the UK Social Investments Forum
Please return this advert with your name, address & telephone no. for more details
FREEPOST Kingswood House, 29 North Street, Bicester, Oxon OX6 7NB
Tel: Bicester (01869) 252545 http://www.kingswoodethical.co.uk
Statutory warning: The value of an investment can fall as well as rise. PIA Statutory notive: PIA does not regulate mortgages.

In a world torn by warfare and beset by inequality, some people still offer hope.

Why not discover the Quakers?

Send for a free information pack on QUAKERS today

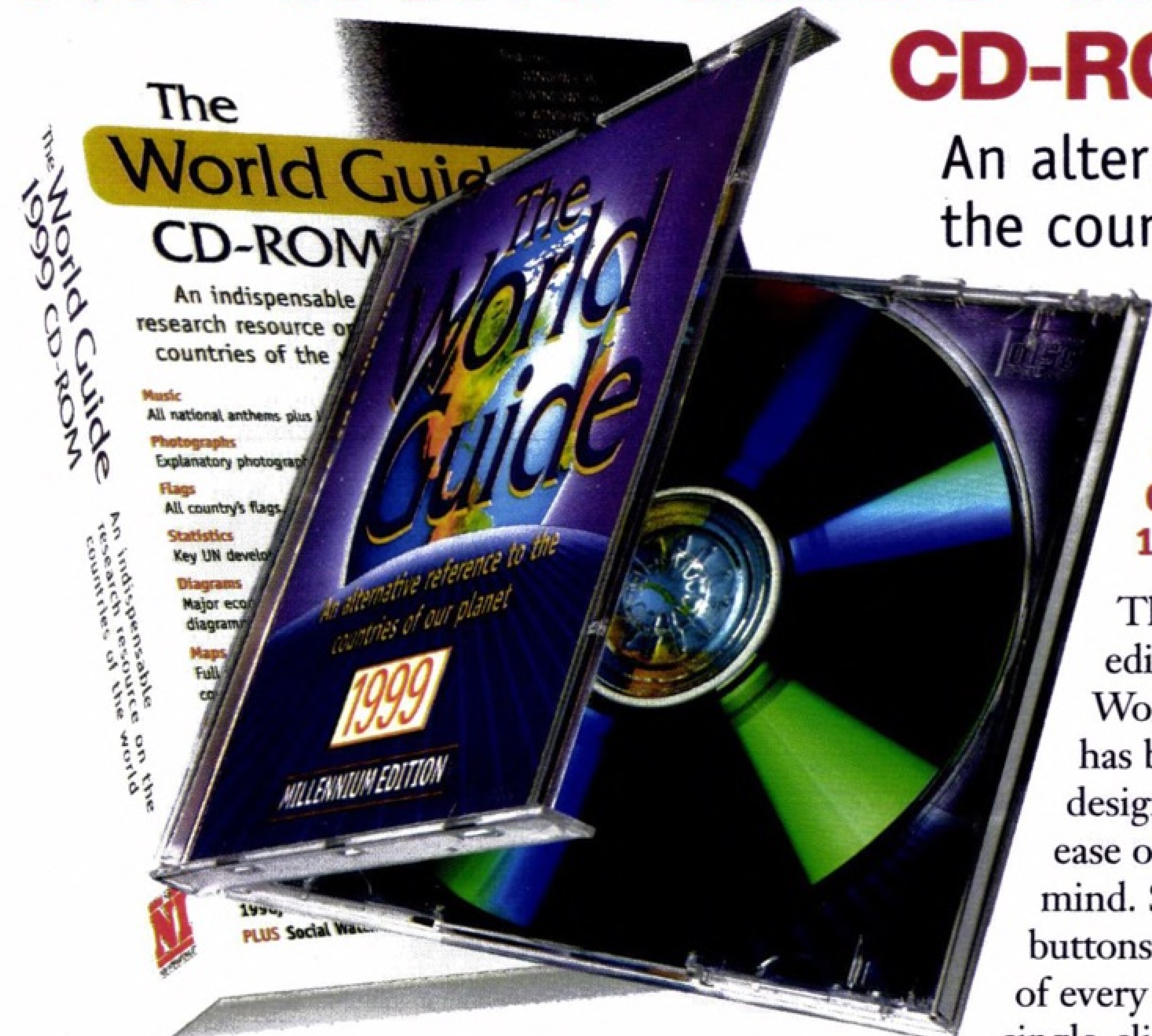
Name: ....
Address: ....
.... Postcode: ....
Post to QIS (NI) Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.
Answerphone: 0171 663 1025. For Scotland, phone: 0131 2254825.
Web: http://www.quaker.org.uk

The World Guide 1999
CD-ROM

Requires:
WINDOWS 95
or WINDOWS 98
or WINDOWS NT WORKSTATION
or WINDOWS NT SERVER

£39.95

An alternative reference to the countries of our planet


The World Guide 1999 CD-ROM
An indispensable research resource on the countries of the world
Music
All national anthems plus
Photographs
Explanatory photograph
Flags
All country's flags
Statistics
Key UN develo
Diagrams
Major eco diagram
Maps
PLUS Social Wat
The World Guide
An alternative reference to the countries of our planet
1999
MILLENNIUM EDITION

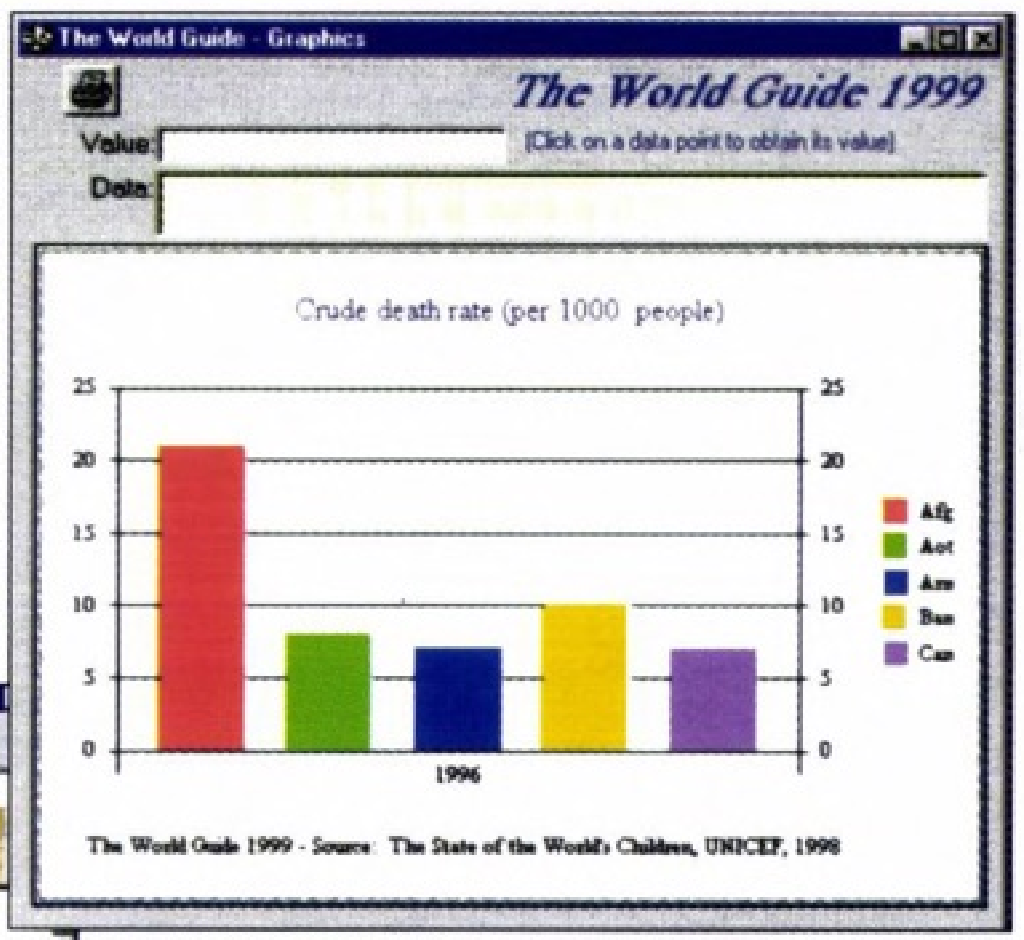
USING THE WORLD GUIDE 1999

This all-new edition of The World Guide has been designed with ease of use in mind. Six menu buttons at the top of every screen give single-click access to all areas of the CD, and ensure you are never far away from where you want to be.

◆ ***Amnesty*** for the latest Amnesty Annual Report on each individual country.

◆ ***Social Watch*** for the latest report on how each country is rated on achieving key social development targets.

◆ ***Tables*** to review indicators for each country such as the percentage of mothers breast-feeding or the adult literacy rate for women.

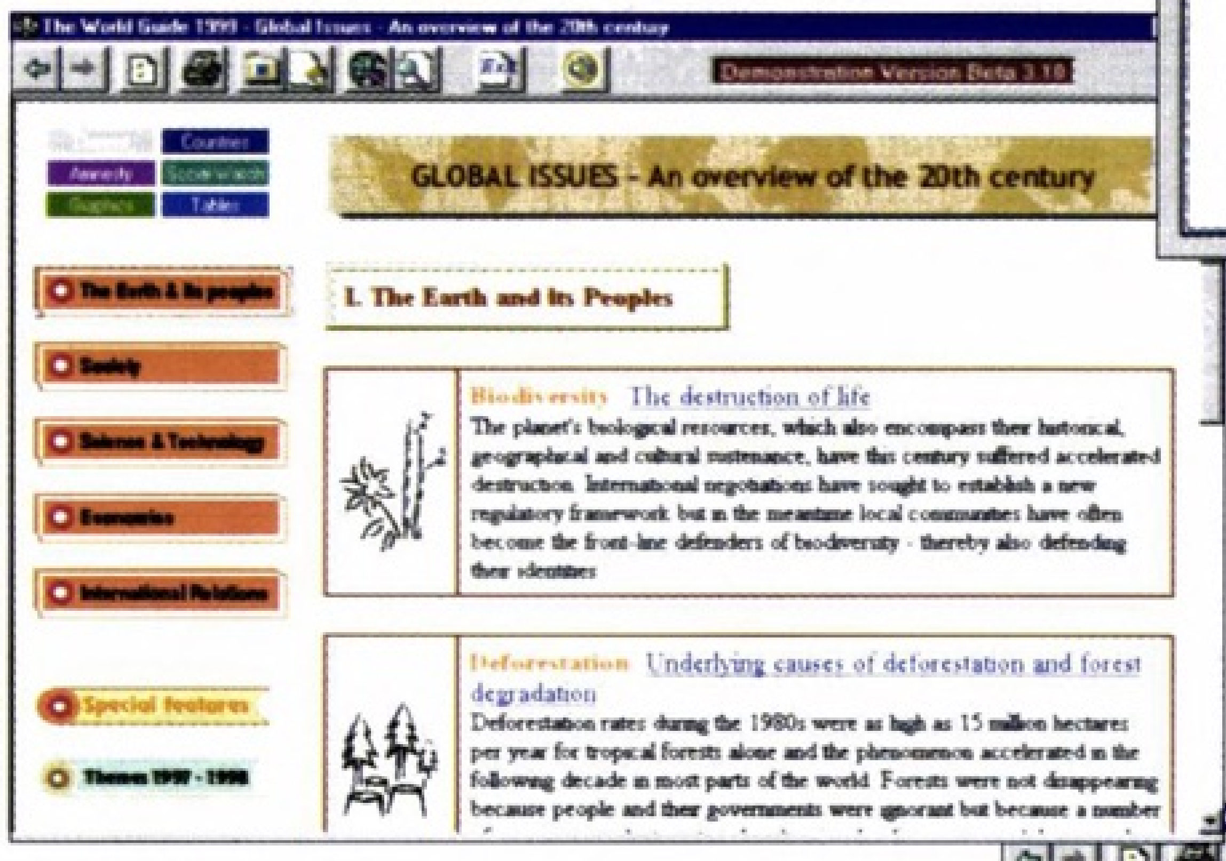

The World Guide - Graphics
The World Guide 1999
Value
Data
[Click on a data point to obtain its value]
Crude death rate (per 1000 people)
0
5
10
15
20
25
1996
Afg
Aot
Am
Bas
Can
The World Guide 1999 - Source: The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 1998

◆ ***Graphics*** to present your chosen indicators graphically, with data for several chosen countries side by side.

THIS new World Guide 1999 CD-ROM is an ideal reference tool for all teachers, students, researchers, report writers and journalists, together with any home interested in hard and up-to-date information on every country in the world.

It is a major reference guide WITH AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE. For the information carried by the three works on this CD-ROM emphasise different priorities from more standard texts. These works are particularly concerned with:

- ◆ HUMAN RIGHTS
- ◆ ENVIRONMENT
- ◆ INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
- ◆ MILITARISM
- ◆ SEXUAL & RACIAL DISCRIMINATION


The World Guide 1999 - Global Issues - An overview of the 20th century
Demonstration Version Beta 3.10
Countries
Amnesty
Social Watch
Graphics
Tables
The Earth & its peoples
Society
Science & Technology
Economics
International Relations
Special features
Themes 1997 - 1998

GLOBAL ISSUES - An overview of the 20th century

1. The Earth and its Peoples

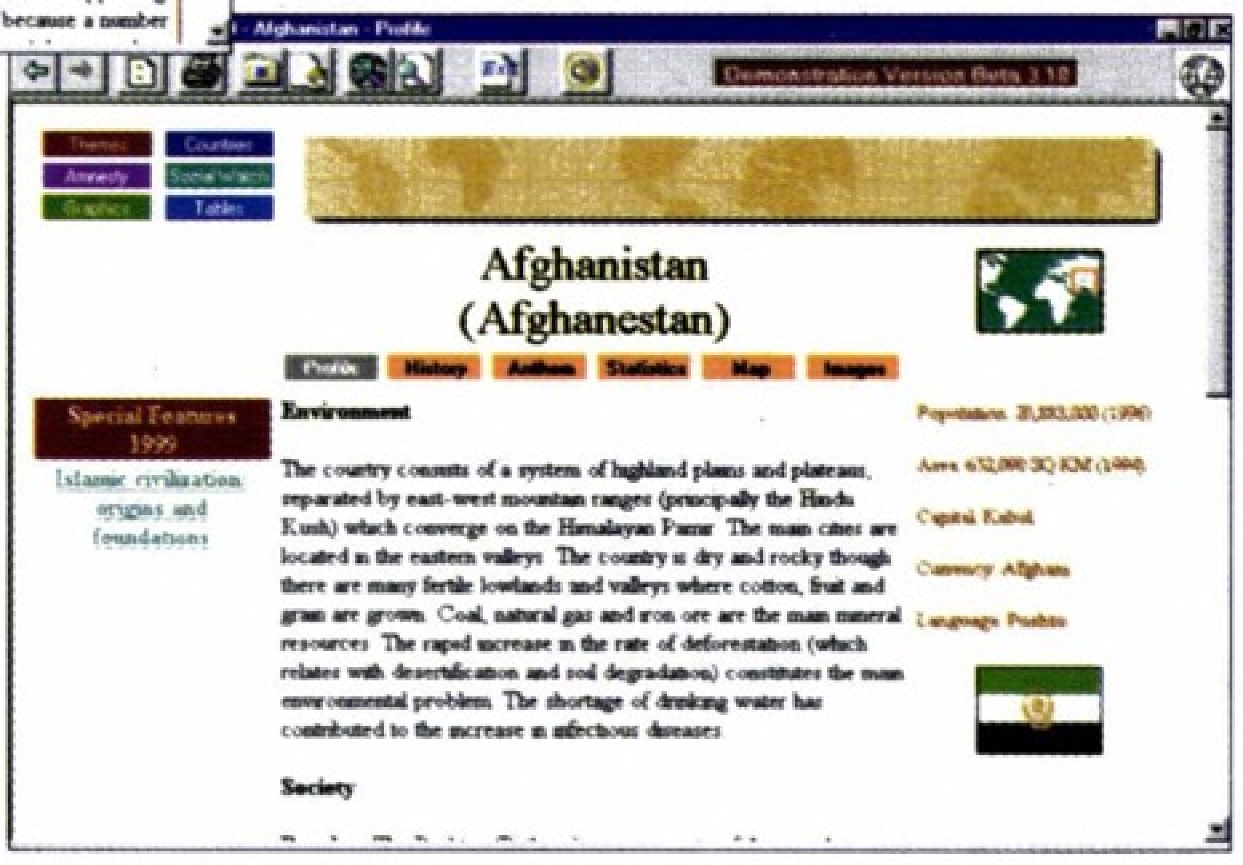
Biodiversity The destruction of life
The planet's biological resources, which also encompass their historical, geographical and cultural sustenance, have this century suffered accelerated destruction. International negotiations have sought to establish a new regulatory framework but in the meantime local communities have often become the front-line defenders of biodiversity - thereby also defending their identities

Deforestation Underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation
Deforestation rates during the 1980s were as high as 15 million hectares per year for tropical forests alone and the phenomenon accelerated in the following decade in most parts of the world. Forests were not disappearing because people and their governments were ignorant but because a number

Click on:

◆ ***Themes*** to read a fascinating overview of the major development themes of the twentieth century.

◆ ***Countries*** to study a particular country, including its historical overview, profile, location map, country map, key statistical indicators, flag and anthem.


Afghanistan - Profile
Demonstration Version Beta 3.10
Themes
Countries
Amnesty
Social Watch
Graphics
Tables
Profile
History
Anthem
Statistics
Map
Images
Special Features 1999
Islamic civilisation: origins and foundations

Afghanistan
(Afghanestan)

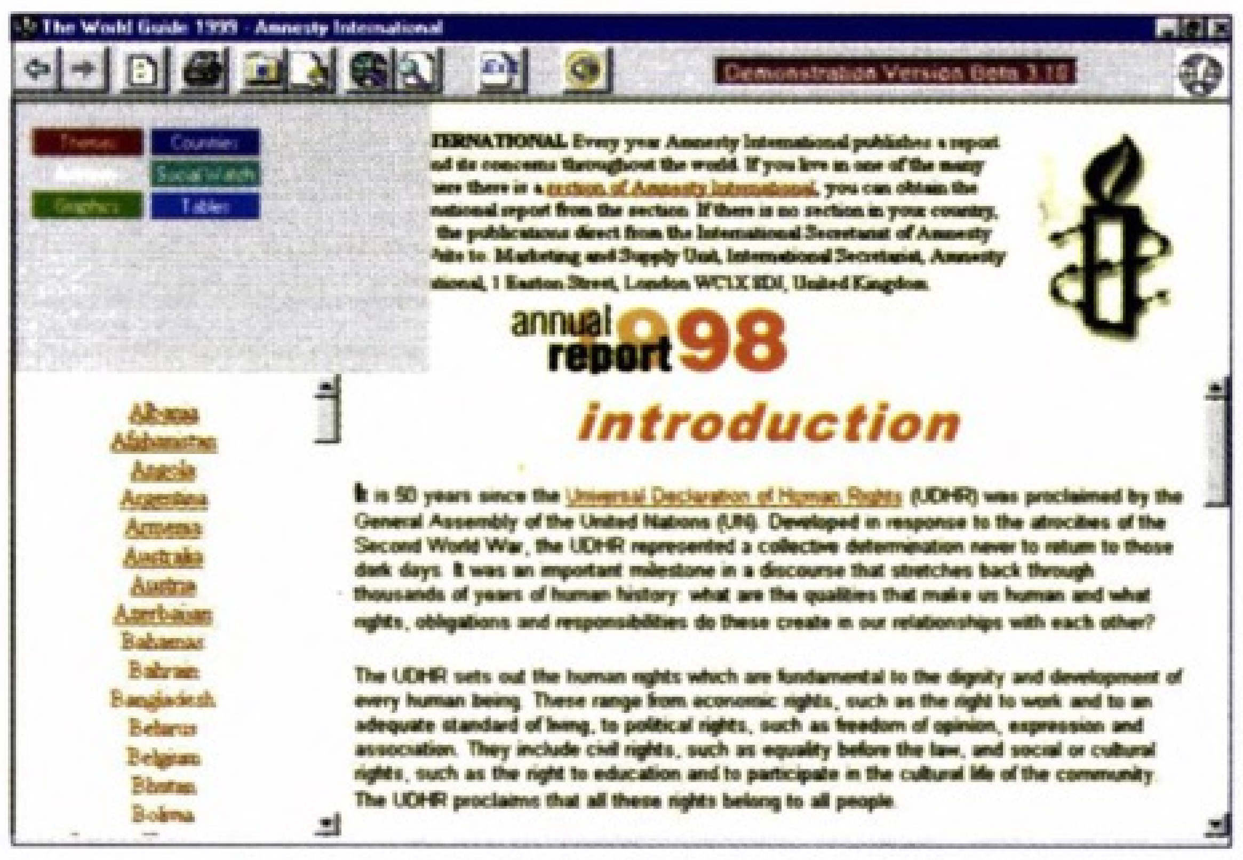
Environment

The country consists of a system of highland plains and plateaus, separated by east-west mountain ranges (principally the Hindu Kush) which converge on the Himalayan Pamir. The main cities are located in the eastern valleys. The country is dry and rocky though there are many fertile lowlands and valleys where cotton, fruit and grain are grown. Coal, natural gas and iron ore are the main mineral resources. The rapid increase in the rate of deforestation (which relates with desertification and soil degradation) constitutes the main environmental problem. The shortage of drinking water has contributed to the increase in infectious diseases.

Society

Population: 20,883,000 (1996)
Area: 652,090 SQ KM (1994)
Capital: Kabul
Currency: Afghani
Language: Pashto

This CD ROM adds up to
information, graphs and statistics which are eminently exportable to reports, assignments, essays, lectures, articles and research papers.


The World Guide 1999 - Amnesty International
Demonstration Version Beta 3.10
Themes
Countries
Amnesty
Social Watch
Graphics
Tables
annual report 98
Albania
Afghanistan
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Bhutan
Bolivia

TERNATIONAL Every year Amnesty International publishes a report ad its concerns throughout the world. If you live in one of the many ere there is a section of Amnesty International, you can obtain the national report from the section. If there is no section in your country, the publications direct from the International Secretariat of Amnesty ite to: Marketing and Supply Unit, International Secretariat, Amnesty tional, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom.

introduction

It is 50 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN). Developed in response to the atrocities of the Second World War, the UDHR represented a collective determination never to return to those dark days. It was an important milestone in a discourse that stretches back through thousands of years of human history: what are the qualities that make us human and what rights, obligations and responsibilities do these create in our relationships with each other?

The UDHR sets out the human rights which are fundamental to the dignity and development of every human being. These range from economic rights, such as the right to work and to an adequate standard of living, to political rights, such as freedom of opinion, expression and association. They include civil rights, such as equality before the law, and social or cultural rights, such as the right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community. The UDHR proclaims that all these rights belong to all people.

ISBN 1 869847 69 5

Discover the world at a click of a mouse!

SEE ORDER FORM INSIDE THIS MAGAZINE

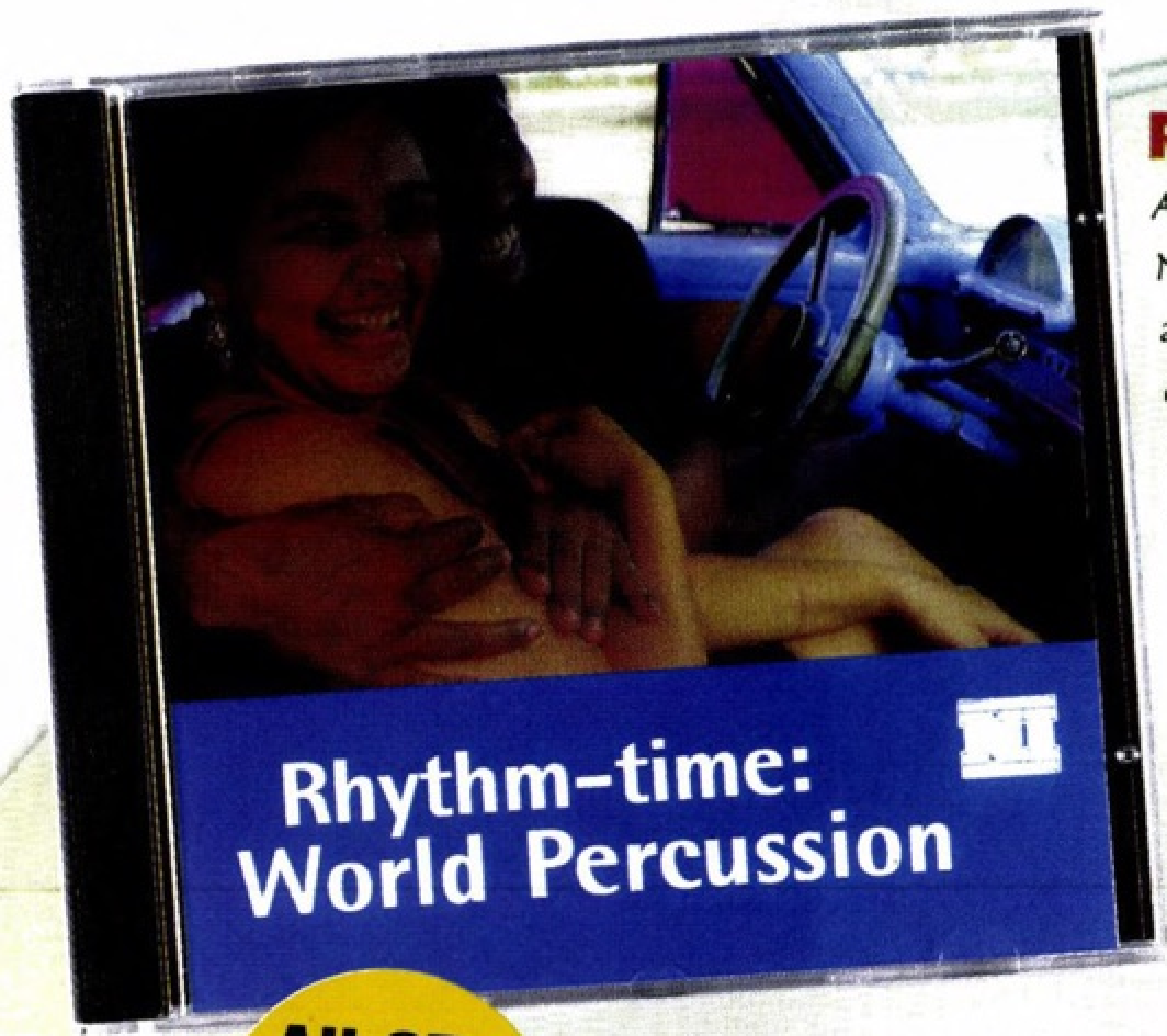
Site licenses are available;
please contact your nearest
New Internationalist Office for details or
e-mail jol@newint.org (UK) or
brianl@newint.com.au (Australia)

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: ◆ *486 with 66 MHz processor (Pentium processor preferred)* ◆ *16 Mb RAM (32 MB recommended) and 70 MB of hard-disk space* ◆ **Windows® 95** or **Windows® 98** or **Windows NT® Workstation** or **Windows NT® Server**, *version 4.0 or later running Service Pack 3 or higher* ◆ *256 color display or better (a better graphics card is recommended)* ◆ *Sound blaster compatible sound card and speakers* ◆ *2x speed CD-ROM drive or better* ◆ *MS Internet Explorer 4 (if not already installed, hard disk space required for installation is 20 MB for user-installed files). If you do not have it installed you may do so from The World Guide CD-ROM.*
Networks: *This product has been designed and tested to allow network operation and should function properly in any Windows network, including in CD stacker environments.*

GUARANTEE: IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THIS CD-ROM, JUST RETURN IT WITHIN TEN DAYS FOR A FULL NO-QUIBBLE REFUND.

ALTERNATIVE • SOUNDS •

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST



RHYTHM TIME: WORLD PERCUSSION

A drumming and percussion journey across the world and through the ages. From the thunderous sounds of Nigerian Fuji dub and Brazilian batucada to the stunning intricacies of Afro-Cuban rumba. There is an astonishing array of percussion instruments such as Ghanaian djembes, Indian tablas, Senegalese talking drums, Zimbabwean mbiras, Arabic daraboukas and Cuban congas. Contributors include the great Brazilian master Airto Moreira who features on two tracks, Ifang Bondi who are one of West Africa's leading pop groups, the Karnataka College of Percussion from India and a range of celebrated artists from Cuba, the island which has produced a host of dance rhythms adopted by musicians throughout the world. This album provides a fascinating insight into the wealth of world percussion.

'Not a decent tune on it! Tremendous banging and hammering from all over the world.'

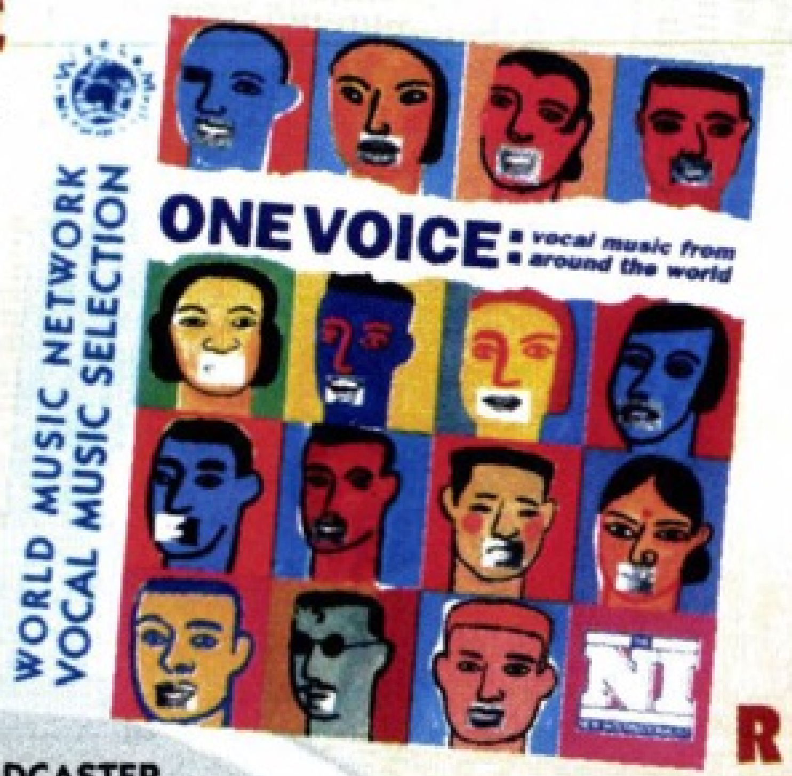
ANDY KERSHAW, BBC BROADCASTER

All CDs less than £10

SPECIAL OFFER TO NEW INTERNATIONALIST READERS •

Buy 3 CDs and/or cassettes and receive this stunning album FREE (CD only)

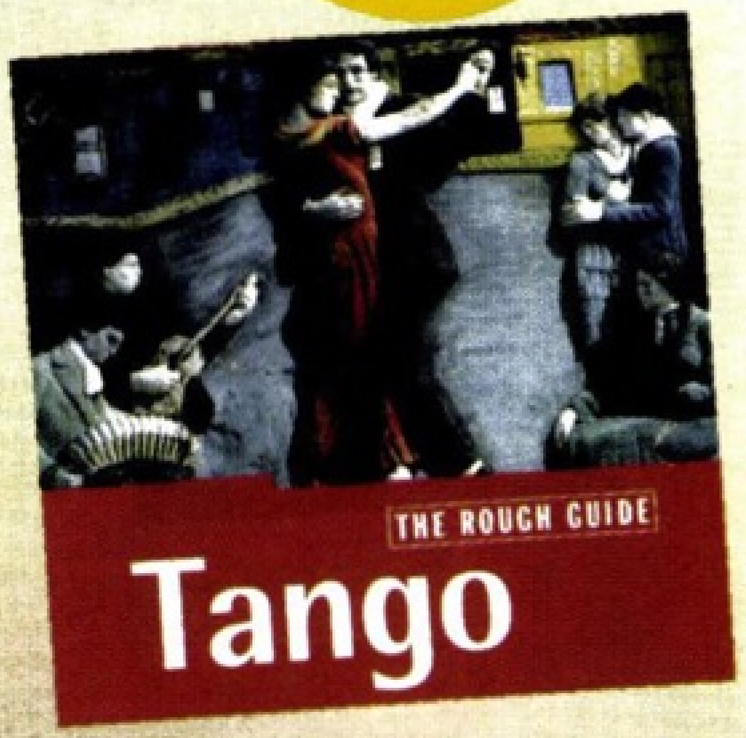
ONE VOICE



The world's musical diversity is reflected by the human voice in all its intimacy and grandeur. This unique album compiled for New Internationalist switches from the throat singers of Siberia to Polynesian choirs, and features internationally acclaimed artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, The Trio Bulgarka, and Billy Bragg.

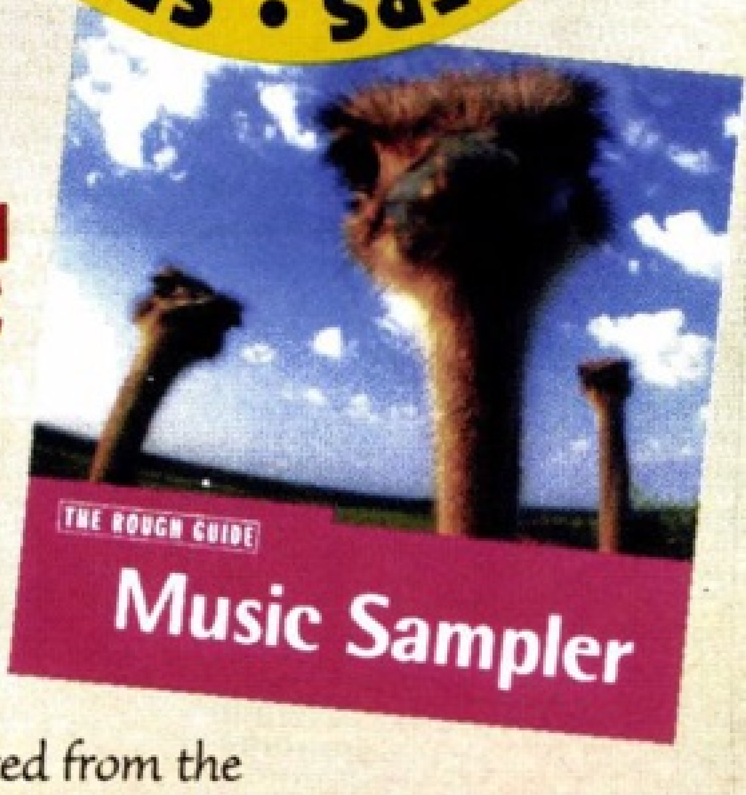
"An astonishing showcase for the breathtaking versatility of the world's most important instrument"

ANDY KERSHAW, BBC BROADCASTER



TANGO

Forget the image of mannered ballroom-dancing. Tango is a real roots music: sometimes sleazy, sometimes elegant, but always sensuous, rhythmic and passionate. This album features Carlos Gendel who before his death in an air crash in 1935 transformed the formerly lowlife dance style into a mass culture enjoyed by all social classes. Also Astor Piazzola, the key figure in the history of modern tango, and many others, to provide a comprehensive view of Argentina's best loved export.



ROUGH GUIDE MUSIC SAMPLER

(free with 3 CDs and/or cassettes)

A roller coaster ride of 16 tracks selected from the wide variety of albums produced in the Rough Guide series since 1994. Examples of the albums and musicians featured are from Zimbabwe - Thomas Mapfumo, The Andes - Into Illimani, English Roots - Hank Dogs, Cajun and Zydeco - David Doucet, Reggae - The Congos, Jazz - Bessie Smith.

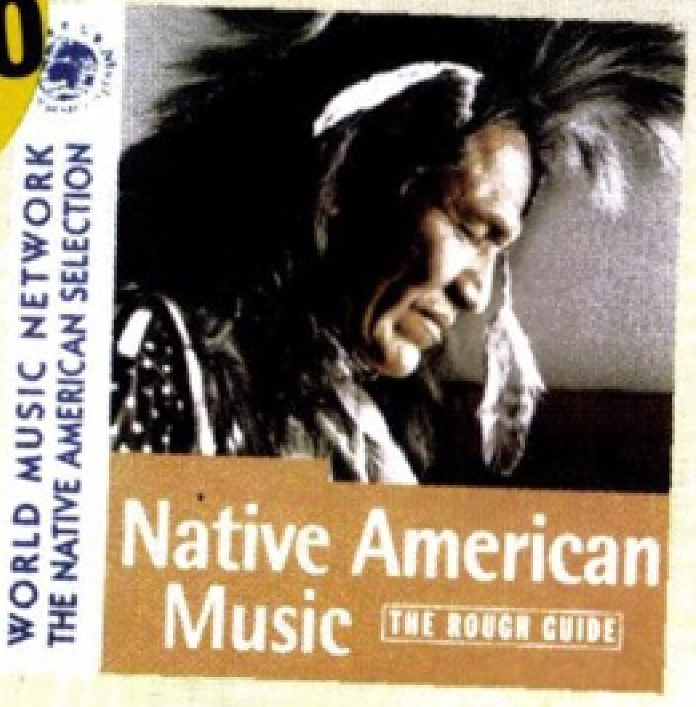
All between 65 and 80 minutes

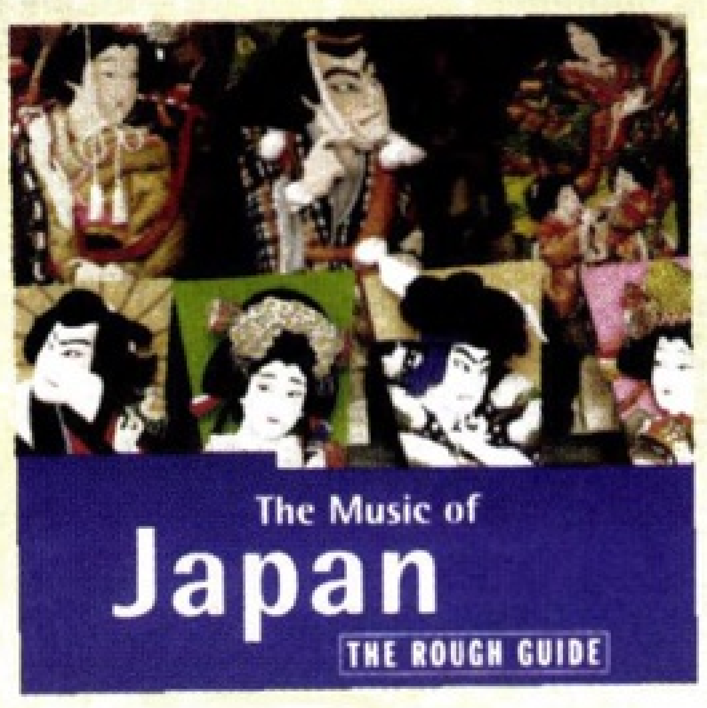
NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC

From powwow to polka, from sacred songs to cross cultural and urban sounds this album displays the full range of Native American music. Recently there has been a major revival and this is showcased in this album which features the contemporary flute, guitar and percussion of Burning Sky, the uplifting vocal harmonies of Walela (featuring Rita Coolidge), and singer-songwriters Sharon Burch and Bill Miller.

"Recommended. A splendid assortment....... **". CLASSIC CD**

"This listenable collection welds accessible updated songs with traditional chants, ceremonial pieces and dances. **" Q**





JAPAN

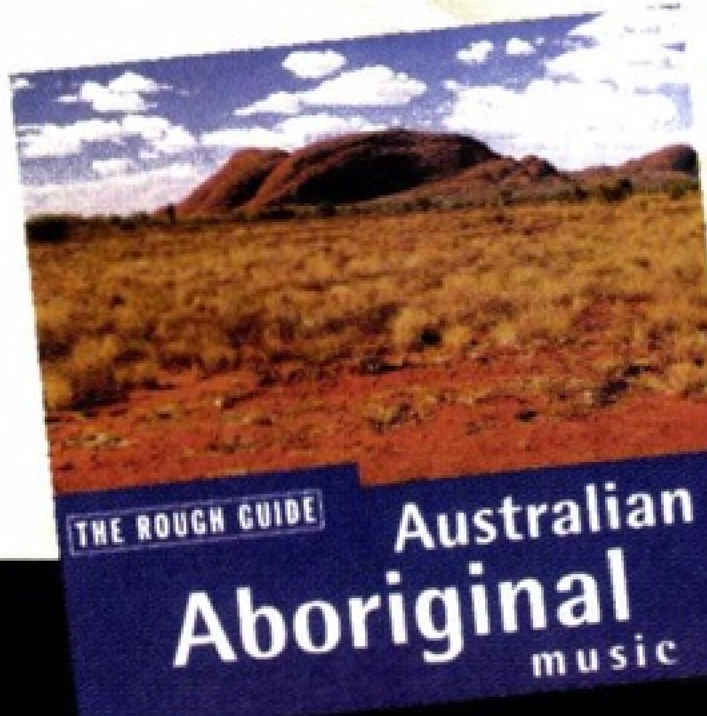
Just released, this unique album offers 75 minutes from leading Japanese musicians who display a fascinating mix of traditional music blended with contemporary sounds. There's a fresh surprise in each of the 19 tracks, whether it is the James Bond Theme played by the Surf Champlers, the beautiful and haunting music produced by the kotos (zithers) of Koto Vortex, or the thrilling energy of the brass band Cicala Mvta. Many of the performers offer radical interpretations of traditional songs and are clearly well attuned to modern music in other cultures. Stick this on your Sony for a real treat.

EASTERN EUROPE

A rich collection from this musically and culturally diverse area. Some of Europe's foremost and most inspired vocalists are featured. Marta Sebestyen, the greatest interpreter of Hungarian folk music and featured on the soundtrack of The English Patient, The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices Choir with their famous traditional and complex harmonies, and Trio Bulgarka. There is exuberant dance music from Apparatshcik (Russia) and Ferus Mustafov (Macedonia) and the rich culture of the Gypsy people is demonstrated by Tarafde Haidouks (The Orchestra of Honourable Brigands).

"It's a splendid sampler" SONGLINES

WORLD MUSIC NETWORK
EASTERN EUROPE SELECTION
The Music of
Eastern Europe
THE ROUGH GUIDE



AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL

Against a history of exploitation and pain Aboriginal artists have now arrived as a powerful force in contemporary music and one bound up with the struggle for land rights and an end to discrimination. Politics is always on the agenda, but so too is spirituality. Singer-songwriters include wife and husband. Ruby Hunter and Archie Roach. There is also traditional music in its purest form with several field recordings. And, of course there is the didgeridoo whose deep resonant tone has become the most distinctive addition to contemporary Aboriginal bands.

All music produced by World Music Network. All CDs are £9.95 and Cassettes £6.95.
To order these albums please use the order form stitched between the back cover and the rest of the magazine.